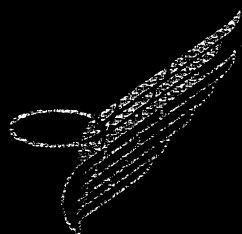


# LESS THAN THE ANGELS



ROGER B. DOOLEY

AVILA COLLEGE



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# *LESS THAN THE ANGELS*

by *ROGER B. DOOLEY*

*To the College of St. Teresa Libr  
Roger B. Dooley*

The Bruce Publishing Company

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*18037*

MILWAUKEE

*THE diocese of Lakeport, together with all its institutions and inhabitants, is a purely fictitious composite. For the sake of concreteness, it bears certain resemblances in size and atmosphere to the city which the author knows best, but this does not mean that the characters, conversations, or events ever existed outside these pages.*

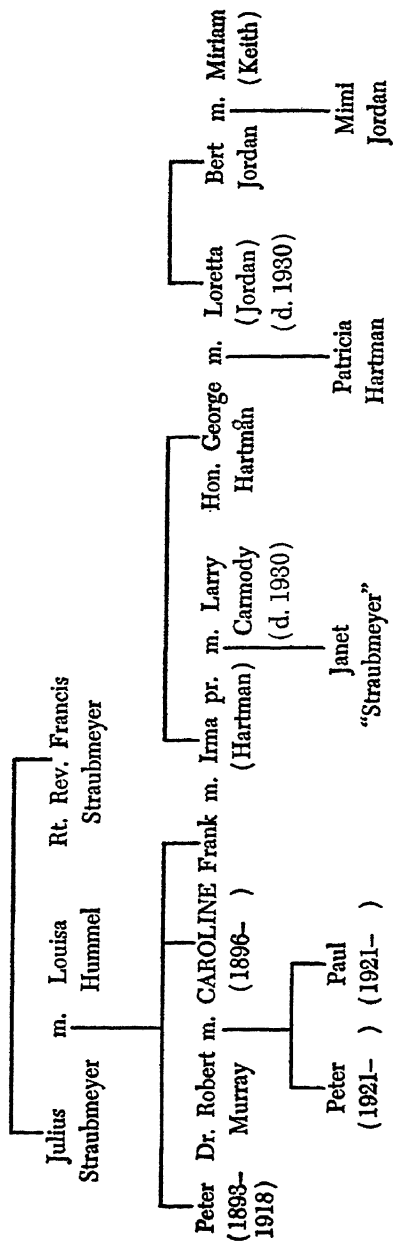
TO MY MOTHER



THOU HAST MADE A MAN A LITTLE  
LESS THAN THE ANGELS

PSALMS 8:5

LEADING PERSONS IN  
"LESS THAN THE ANGELS"



## Prologue

"WHERE you goin', Carrie?" Her mother's plaintive German intonation had always grated on Caroline, but especially during the past few years, when even a Teutonic name had become so questionable that Straubmeyer's "Lorelei" itself ("The Lager Lakeport Loves") had been prudently changed to "Liberty," with the blonde siren on the label replaced by the more American goddess.

"Just over to Rosemary's, Mama. She's going to help me address some of these." Caroline picked up her box of invitations from the library table.

Content, Louisa Straubmeyer bent again over the pillow slip on which she was embroidering her daughter's initials. With her still fair hair knotted plainly on top, her small jet earrings, and the neat apron over her black silk dress, she looked the perfect "hausfrau" — just the type Caroline had once dreaded to become. Indeed, although Rosemary's family had been only too proud to send her to Trinity, Caroline had encountered real opposition in her parents' staid German ideas of woman's proper place. But Caroline, as always, had known just what she was doing. College had opened up a whole new world to her; besides, girls who had done so many unheard-of things during the war were not going meekly back to the kitchen now.

"It is eight o'clock already." Looking up from the *Lake-*

port *Volksprache*, Julius Straubmeyer took the meerschau pipe from beneath his drooping gray mustache. "Don't stay out too late. I don't want you should be walking the streets alone late at night."

"I'll be all right, Papa." Caroline escaped between the green velvet portieres into the hall and out the front door.

One paid the price for being an only daughter, she thought, but she prided herself on her patience with her parents. So, although she could hardly indulge their sentimental whim of postponing her wedding until the June day of their thirtieth anniversary, she was quite willing to wear her mother's bridal gown — and not merely because the bouffant lines of 1889 flattered her Junoesque figure more than the present pencil-slim silhouette, she told herself. Nor had she any objection to a ceremony in the old family parish, now that the pastor, her uncle Francis, had become *Monsignor* Straubmeyer.

In the chilly March evening Caroline walked briskly. She passed the substantial brick houses of Tulip Street, with lights gleaming through heavily draped windows, and turned into Daisy Place. "The Flower Bed," the rest of the city called this solidly respectable German section, half in amusement and half in affection for the thrifty burghers who made up such a large part of the half-million population of this, the "Key City of the Great Lakes."

Wondering in spite of herself what could be the news at which Rosemary had hinted so cryptically over the phone, Caroline crossed Main Street and continued westward the few remaining blocks to Baltimore Avenue, at the corner of which stood the Quinn homestead, built by Rosemary's father himself, a prosperous contractor. It was, if anything, more imposing than Caroline's house, for the



Irish were more inclined to spend their new fortunes — not that it got them any further socially, Caroline reflected grimly, pressing the doorbell.

"Mother and Dad are out," called Rosemary from the head of the stairs, as the maid took Caroline's cape. "Come on up."

Raising the dotted veil, Caroline unpinned her thick beaver hat, and before the hall-rack mirror gave a smoothing pat to the two coils of fair braid that framed her firm, even features. The slight color in her cheeks had come only from the March wind, for rouge was still forbidden in the Straubmeyer household.

In the daintily furnished bedroom she always envied, Caroline settled on a window seat, while Rosemary — almost too well-dressed in her beaded chiffon blouse and trim, blue, hobble skirt — sat at her desk. Her face was just too sharp for conventional prettiness, and she wore glasses; but her hair was beautiful, Caroline had to admit, if you liked such a flaming red.

"How shall we do these invitations?" she asked, making no mention of whatever it was she had meant on the phone. Caroline was curious but unwilling to be the one to bring up the subject.

"We'll each take half," she said, dividing the invitations. "You can do this list here and I'll do this other one."

"Quite a list!" Rosemary observed. "Aren't you asking any of Bob's folks?"

"Of course! Those last six names there are all his relatives, and besides there's that old doctor that put him through Georgetown. I suppose they'll just send presents. They wouldn't know anyone else at the wedding."

"Will Bob?" asked Rosemary dryly.

Caroline ignored that. Was Rosemary trying to put off telling her news with these pointless questions?

"You know perfectly well he's been here nearly six months now," she said with dignity, "and making more contacts every day, thanks to me and my family. Why, he'll have a bigger practice here in a year than he ever would have had in that God-forsaken town he came from."

"He probably will, at that. For someone who started out to be a country doctor, he's certainly changed his ideas."

"Well, he didn't know what he wanted, really. He needed someone like me. I realized that as soon as I got to know him."

Indeed, she had realized that as soon as she had seen him, at that memorable Trinity tea early in her junior year. She had been listening with rapt inattention while a Catholic University law student explained why Hughes would inevitably defeat Wilson in November, when she became aware of someone's gaze. Glancing up, she saw a tall, slightly tousled young man, evidently just arrived and wondering what to do next. Before he could lower his eyes, she caught a look of such open admiration that a warm glow spread through her. Her looks were not of a kind generally admired in an era that idolized Irene Castle's daintiness, but suddenly she felt beautiful — more beautiful than all the pretty little dark-haired or red-haired Irish girls around her. "Like Brunhilda ought to look but never does," Bob often told her later. "I knew right away you were for me. Did you?" "Of course, dear," Caroline always answered. She had known, all right. She had been so sure that she immediately fell into absorbed conversation with the law student, simply waiting for Bob to find his way to her.

But this momentary reverie brought her no closer to the real reason Rosemary had asked her over. Rather than be kept in suspense the rest of the evening, Caroline decided to give in.

"But I'm sure you didn't have me come over just to talk about Bob," she said. "Didn't you say something about some news for me?"

"Oh, that." Rosemary smiled mysteriously. "Well, I'm not so sure you'll want to hear it, after all."

"Well, don't just sit there trying to look like the Mona Lisa! Is it good news or bad?"

"That all depends on the way you look at it. It's good, in a way, but it may seem bad to you."

"Rosemary, are you going to keep this up all night? Did you or did you not say you had something to tell me?"

"Oh, I have something, all right. I just don't want it to be too much of a shock."

"Well, for goodness' sake, the longer you keep me in the dark, the worse you make it sound!"

"All right, then, you asked for it. Russell is home. He got in unexpectedly this afternoon."

"Oh, is that all?" Caroline was genuinely relieved. "And here you had me thinking it was something awful!"

"It may be yet," said Rosemary. "He still doesn't know about your engagement. Aunt Molly was telling Mother over the phone she just didn't know how to break it to him."

"Break it to him!" Caroline put down her pen, abandoning any further attempt to address invitations. "You make it sound as if I jilted him for Bob or something."

"I didn't say that. Still, it is going to be hard to explain."

"Why should it be?" Caroline demanded. "There was never any talk of marriage between us."

"Not in so many words, maybe. Well, I just didn't want him to catch you unawares, as much for his sake as yours. As cousins go, he's less obnoxious than most of mine."

"But he must know there was nothing between us! That was before my last year at school."

"It was only a year ago last summer," Rosemary reminded. "And Russell's not the type who forgets quickly."

Caroline laughed impatiently. "Oh, nonsense, Rosemary. I did see a lot of him that summer, I know. But heavens, Russell is so shy he never even tried to kiss me."

"Still water runs deep," said Rosemary ominously. "You know your uncle always thought Russell might be a priest — till you took up with him."

"If he ever had any such intention, I'm sure I couldn't have stopped him," Caroline protested; but nevertheless the charge made her uncomfortable. She did not like herself in the role of worldly temptress interfering with a possible vocation merely to further her own plans.

"I hope you're right. But Russell has always been so sensitive, you know — on account of being the younger son, I suppose, with Larry so popular and inheriting the saloon business and everything."

"That reminds me," said Caroline, more than ready to change the subject. "I don't suppose Larry will be back in time, but I've been thinking of inviting Irma to my wedding breakfast."

"Irma? She didn't ask you to hers."

"Oh, well," said Caroline tolerantly, "with Larry going away the next week, it was quite hectic, like all those war weddings. But I've always been very fond of Irma Hart-

man. Remember how I worked to elect her secretary of our class at Mount Carmel?"

"But you were keeping your breakfast list so exclusive. Won't you have to cut out one of those you were considering?"

"Well, yes, as a matter of fact." Caroline toyed with the box in her hand. "I'm afraid I won't have room for poor Loretta Jordan."

Rosemary laughed aloud at that.

"Listen, dear, this is Rosemary, your old Trinity roommate! Why didn't you tell me all, instead of going on about your beautiful friendship for Irma? 'Poor Loretta' is right, after that nice shower she gave for you."

"I hope I can invite whom I wish to my own wedding breakfast," said Caroline coldly.

"But after all, Carrie, it's not Loretta's fault that she's Bert Jordan's sister."

"Rosemary, please!" Caroline frowned and pressed her lips together. Even for an intimate friend and prospective maid of honor, Rosemary sometimes went too far. "When I confided in you about that — unfortunate affair, I asked you never again to mention it or Bert Jordan to me."

"Oh, act your age! You must be over him now as much as you ever will be. You were just saying how long it was since you went with Russell—that was the same spring Bert first took up with the too, too blue-blooded Miriam Keith."

"You don't have to remind me!" Never would Caroline forget the bitter humiliation of that Easter vacation, when she first realized that even a brilliant Trinity junior could not compete with a genuine debutante in Bert's judicious favor. "Well, at least no one ever knew the position it left me in."

"Naturally not, with Russell around for you to be seen with."

"Anyway, I should be glad things worked out as they did," said Caroline virtuously. "Since Bert is the kind of man who'll give up his religion to marry money."

"Even that wouldn't have helped if it wasn't for the war," Rosemary observed. "Lieutenant Jordan, Lakeport's hero, sounds a lot different from Bert Jordan, the good-looking clerk in old Keith's bank."

"I prefer to forget the whole thing. Though I do think he could have kept his faith and that Keith girl, too, if only he'd played his cards right." Or better still, she thought, if Bert had only waited, he and she might have scaled the Lakeport heights together. Though scarcely comparable to the Keith millions, the Straubmeyer brewery fortune was one of the largest of its kind in the city.

Rosemary laughed incredulously. "Now, Carrie! You know as well as I do, those dear Episcopalian souls that call themselves Lakeport society would rather have one of their children marry a Holy Roller than a Catholic."

"Yes, but things may be different now," Caroline argued. This was a subject dear to her heart — dearer than even Rosemary guessed. "Even in Lakeport, nothing can ever be quite the same as before the war. Why shouldn't Catholics come into their own here? You remember some of those girls at school whose families were right at the top in Washington? Even in New York —"

"They're Tammany politicians' daughters and this is a Democratic administration," Rosemary countered. "Besides, the war is over now, and if you ask me, good old Lakeport is going to leave Catholics right on their nice little shelves."

"We'll see," said Caroline, confident that the local social citadel could no longer resist the combined forces of money, brains, and supreme determination. "At least, when this Prohibition law goes into effect, I'll no longer be known as a brewery heiress."

"Does a soft-drink heiress sound any better?" asked Rosemary. "Honestly, though, wouldn't it jar you, the way those A.P.A.'s are worrying now about the boys becoming drunkards — the same ones that didn't mind a bit using them for cannon fodder? What's left of the brewery certainly won't be much of a career for Frank, will it?"

"That's just it. We all want him to finish at St. Ignatius and be a lawyer, like George Hartman, but after those months at camp he just doesn't seem to care about college. Of course, once we get back to normalcy, the business will still give him enough to make him quite a catch for some girl."

"Carrie, you're as subtle as the Kaiser! I know you've tried, but you couldn't force me down Frank's throat with a shoehorn. It might have been different if Peter had come back from the war, but I'll always be just a big sister to Frank."

"Well, you could do worse," said Caroline. "So could he — and he probably will. Is that the doorbell?"

"I don't know who it could be at this time. Dad has his key."

In a moment the maid appeared.

"It's Private Carmody, Miss Rosemary — Mr. Russell."

"For heaven's sake, Rosemary!" cried Caroline. "You didn't ask him here!"

"Of course not! But maybe it's just as well. He's got to know sooner or later."

Caroline let Rosemary precede her down the stairs, mentally kicking herself for ever having come over. It was perfectly true that Russell had never meant anything to her, but, looking back, she could see how a different impression might have been made. After all, in that hectic summer of 1917 one said almost anything to cheer the boys on their way. Even then she had known that once back in Washington she would bring young Dr. Murray to the proposal point — but she could hardly explain that to Russell. She did wish, though, that someone had at least written to him about her engagement. Her own letters, though noncommittal, had never changed their warmly interested tone.

Standing at the foot of the stairs, he looked too young for his uniform, with his boyishly sensitive face and those strangely expressive dark eyes — the very opposite of freckled, sunny, dependable Bob. Amid hearty greetings, Russell gave Rosemary a cousinly kiss, and then turned to Caroline with one scarcely as warm. Caroline knew she should have been relieved, but somehow she felt a little disappointed. Even if Russell noticed the ring on the third finger of her left hand (it was Bob's Georgetown ring, made over), no doubt he thought it was her own from Trinity.

"I called your house and your mother said you were here, Caroline, so I came right over," he explained.

"I'm glad to see you looking so well, Russell," said Caroline. She remained standing, so as not to be trapped into a prolonged stay.

"And you're looking even prettier than I remembered," he said with a heartiness that fell quite flat. "Over there, when things got especially bad, sometimes I used to pic-



ture you just the way you looked that last day at the station."

"You must tell me about it some time," Caroline smiled. "But right now I really must be going. I was just going to leave when we heard the bell ring, wasn't I, Rosemary?"

"Were you?" said Rosemary. "All right, then, I'll get your invitations."

"Invitations for what?" asked Russell.

"Rosemary will tell you," said Caroline weakly, putting off the evil moment. She was already adjusting her hat before the mirror.

"You didn't think I'd let you walk home alone, did you?" Russell was holding her cape for her.

"Oh, please don't bother, Russell! You and Rosemary must have lots of things to talk about — family things —"

"They can wait. You're the one I've got to talk to," said Russell gravely.

Of all things in the world, Caroline wanted least to be left alone with Russell, without even Rosemary to back her up. But Rosemary looked grimly pleased as she bade them good night.

Russell took Caroline's arm as they walked down the street. In her other arm, the box of invitations felt like a dagger pressing into her breast. How could she ever tell him? Yet even now something within her was rising, not unpleasantly, to meet this supreme challenge to her poise and tact. Her sisterly frankness, touched with just the right shade of gentle regret, would be a model for any woman in such circumstances. Russell, so to speak, would never know what hit him, so easily would he be let down.

"I can hardly believe I'm really back in Lakeport," he was saying. "I've dreamed of it so often it doesn't seem

real — and still, in a way, it's more real than all those months of nightmare in France. It's just like taking up life where I left off."

Russell's introspective musings had always bored her. Taking her cue from his last words, Caroline broke in, "But people can't just take up where they left off. Things change —"

"That's very true, Caroline," Russell agreed. "I'm glad you see it that way. It makes what I have to say easier." He paused uncomfortably and began anew. "Girls never paid much attention to me, you know — not like they did to Larry or Bert Jordan. I was more than flattered to know that you'd even want to go out with me. That summer is something I'll never forget. To me you'll always mean everything sweet and kind and wholesome — all the things I'll remember about Lakeport and my school days — home and back parlors and Mass on First Fridays . . ."

"Yes, Russell?" Caroline prompted, wondering what he could possibly be driving at in this bewildering way. The situation was not developing at all as she had planned.

"Well, frankly, that's *all* you'll mean." Russell took a deep breath. "Try not to let this hurt too much, Caroline, but, you see, the priesthood is my real vocation. I suppose I always knew it deep down, but then when you came along I was confused for a while. Maybe it was like a test for me. Anyway, over there in the trenches I got to see things clearly again."

"The priesthood?" Caroline echoed feebly, completely let down by this anticlimax.

"Yes. The world is going to need priests now as it seldom has before, and I want to be one of them, at least trying to do some real good. I know you'll understand,

Caroline, you're so kind yourself. I only hope nothing I said ever led you to think we —"

Caroline scarcely attended his words, her thoughts in a whirl of incredulous indignation. Here was Russell trying to spare *her* feelings! She would show him who had given up whom.

"In that case, you may as well know now, Russell." Her voice cut through his like a cold, steel knife. "These invitations here are for my wedding. I'm going to be married Easter Monday."

"Married!" Russell sounded even more stunned than she had hoped. "But Caroline, who? I thought you expected —"

Caroline's words flowed freely now that the worst was out.

"Dr. Robert Murray. You wouldn't know him. He graduated from Georgetown Med School my second year at Trinity. Some heart ailment kept him out of the draft, so he finished his intern work last summer, and now he's practicing here. We're going to live in St. Charles Borromeo, that new parish on the north side —"

"I wouldn't have believed it!" Russell was saying softly, as if he had not heard a single word. "And you never said a thing about it in your letters — nor let anyone else!"

"We didn't want to worry you."

"Worry me? So you would have let me go right on thinking and planning as if nothing had changed!"

"You didn't though, did you?" Caroline cut in. "It seems to me I might make the same complaint about this sudden vocation of yours. How did you know how I'd take that?"

"Caroline, I wasn't even sure myself till recently. Not even my family knows yet; you're the first one. That's why

I wanted to see you tonight. I knew it wouldn't really hurt you, because I never meant that much to you."

"That's not the point!" Caroline kept the offensive. "Obviously I never meant anything to you either. So there's no reason to act as if I'd done you some great wrong."

"There is such a thing as common decency, Caroline," Russell protested. "Even though it wasn't anything real I felt for you, I thought it was at the time — and so did you. Otherwise you would never have led me on the way you did — especially when Bert Jordan was around."

"What do you mean by that?" The catch in her voice gave her away, Caroline realized, even as she spoke.

"You know what I mean, Caroline." Russell's voice was maddeningly calm — even gentle, as if he were already her confessor. "Rosemary tried to drop me a few hints, but I just couldn't believe you'd do anything quite so cold-blooded. I see now, though. You needed someone right here in Lakeport to be seen with until you could make sure of the doctor, didn't you?"

"I don't have to listen to this!" Caroline began walking ahead.

"You might as well." Russell easily caught up with her. "You know, I'm really beginning to understand you for the first time. This poor Murray must be serving his purpose just as I did mine. To think I might have been the lucky man to spite Bert! Now I'm sure my vocation must be providential."

"If you can call it that." Furious, Caroline took refuge in open sneers. "Anyone would think you were a poor loser, the way you're taking on. It — it wouldn't surprise me if you heard about my engagement from someone else and then made up this 'vocation' just to beat me to it!"

The quiet contempt of Russell's look made her immediately regret having gone so far. He did not even stoop to answer the accusation, and in her heart she could not doubt his sincerity. That, in fact, was what made the whole thing so humiliating. Russell was jealous neither of Bert nor of Bob, as she would have liked to believe; he had actually chosen the Church in preference to her, and was reproving her conduct only on ethical grounds. Controlling her bitterness with difficulty, Caroline tried to smooth her way out of the situation.

"You know you don't mean all those unkind things, Russell. You're just upset tonight. You'll feel differently in another few days."

"It's not a question of feeling," said Russell, still with that deadly calm. "Except in the sense that I'm sorry to lose the last of my boyish illusions — about the only one I brought back with me."

"Well, then, what are we being so unpleasant about?"

"Don't you see, Caroline, this could just as easily have happened to some poor young fellow who really was in love with you? What shocks me is to know you're capable of doing that to anyone."

"I'm sorry, Russell. Let's not say any more about it, shall we?"

"It's not quite that easy, Caroline." They had reached the Straubmeyer house by now, but Russell evidently did not intend to leave without finishing what he had to say. "Once a person's eyes are opened, you can never shut them again."

"All right, then, have it your own way. Good night, Russell."

"You still don't realize what you've done — to yourself

more than to anyone else." Russell spoke in the mild, patient tone of one trying hard to make his meaning clear. "You've made the mistake of letting someone see through you completely for once. Even if it's only me, that wasn't wise, Caroline."

"Couldn't we talk about this some other time, Russell? It's quite late —"

"I don't want to talk about it ever again. But I do want you to remember what I said. If you manage well, no one else may ever get the chance to see you as you really are, the way I have tonight. But I'll never see you any other way. You'll probably go very far as Dr. Murray's wife, but to me you'll always be —" he paused, and in the half-light from the street she could see his tolerant, ironic smile — "the brewery heiress who wasn't quite clever enough to land Bert Jordan. Good night, Caroline."

For a moment she stood on the porch, speechless with rage, as Russell's footsteps grew fainter along the street. The cool detachment of his words stung her far more than anger. If he had broken down, shouted, stormed, she could have succeeded in putting him in the wrong. Then would have followed the graceful renunciation scene in which she would promise always to look upon him as a friend. She would have been equal to anything but this dispassionate character analysis, the more humiliating because it was so undeniable.

She was still trembling with tension as she unlocked the door, but already Vanity was beginning to lick its wounds. Even if the mirror Russell had held up to her was not really distorted, it was only his own narrow view that made the likeness so unflattering. In Bob's eyes, as in everyone else's who mattered, she could always see the

reflection of the self she liked best — the clever, popular Trinity graduate about to marry the man of her choice.

Brewery heiress, indeed! A wave of fresh anger swept over her, and a dozen cutting retorts sprang to her lips too late. How dare Russell preach to her! Why had she let him talk to her that way? And a saloonkeeper's son, at that.

As if to reassure herself that all was indeed right with the world, she switched on a lamp in the darkened hall, and, taking out an invitation, read again those beautifully engraved, magically consoling words. Yes, there it was in black and white: "their daughter Caroline Louise . . . to Dr. Robert Emmett Murray . . . Monday morning, the twenty-first of April, nineteen-hundred and nineteen . . ."

Yes, let Russell mock, she thought. Hers would be the last laugh. Nothing could stop her now from getting what she wanted. She would show Russell, Bert, all Lakeport that she was no one to trifle with. Carrie Straubmeyer would soon be forgotten in the general admiration for Mrs. Robert Emmett Murray. What was that familiar line that expressed it so well? Oh, yes. "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." This was hers, and she was taking it.

"I'll show them all!" she promised herself. "Now's the time to get somewhere in this city, and I'm the one that can do it. No one'll ever dare call me 'brewery heiress' again!"

## Chapter 1

"YOU mean you're not going to play golf with Frank today?" Slimly correct at forty-three — even distinguished, with hair prematurely white and ice-blue eyes framed by oxford pince-nez, Caroline faced her husband across their luncheon table. "What's the use of being Health Commissioner if you can't even have a Sunday afternoon to yourself?"

"It's about the only chance I ever get to see any of my old patients," said Bob. His sandy hair was thinning, but otherwise he looked younger than Caroline, so that she was always careful to explain how much older he really was. "After all, they'll mean our bread and butter again next fall if the election doesn't go our way."

"Well, don't forget, Mama and Papa expect us at six." Irritated by thoughts of what a mere political accident might do, Caroline said aloud, "Boys, must you wolf your ice cream that way! You don't want to be sick for tonight, do you?"

"Sorry, Mother," Paul grinned.

"After four years of that St. Ignatius High cafeteria, nothing could make us sick," laughed Peter at the same time. Tall, good-looking, with the straight, fair hair of the Straubmeyers, the Murray twins at eighteen were still indistinguishable to strangers, but despite the same abrupt nose and widely spaced blue eyes, Peter's boyishly



freckled face was somewhat less rounded and ruddy than Paul's.

"Even that Communion breakfast this morning wasn't so hot," Paul added. "The speaker was darn good, though."

"Oh, yes, Mother, we forgot to tell you, it was that Father Carmody from Loyola, that's related to Janet."

"Oh, really?" said Caroline. "I didn't know he was in town."

In such a busy week she could scarcely be expected to keep up with every trifling bit of news. When Russell had gone off to become a Jesuit, Caroline would have liked people to think it was as a balm for blighted love, just as in an F. Marion Crawford novel, but Rosemary's explanation was less romantic. It seemed evident that he had always had a vocation for the priesthood itself, and to one of his intellectual, book-loving nature, the distinguished teaching order offered the most congenial possible religious life. And Rosemary must have known about such things, for it was less than a year later that she herself, to Caroline's greater surprise, had given up a school appointment to join the convent.

"He certainly gave us a nice, snappy little talk," Peter observed.

"Say, Dad, you're going to cut your speech short tonight, aren't you?" asked Paul. "In this kind of weather, the fellows will lynch us if they have to sit there too long waiting for their diplomas."

"Don't worry." The doctor's gray eyes twinkled. "It'll hurt me more than it does you. I wouldn't have accepted at all if the principal were any one but Father McGrath. He was still a scholastic when he taught me at Georgetown, but I'll never forget the time —"

"Now, dear!" Caroline put down her iced coffee. "We're not going to make our boys unhappy by talking any more about Georgetown, are we, after deciding it's quite out of the question for them?"

"Aw, Mother!" Peter began to renew the familiar plea. "Isn't there any chance of changing your mind about that?"

"All the kids naturally thought we'd go there on account of Dad," Paul put in.

"Then you must have given them that idea," said Caroline. "When it's time for you to go to professional school, I've no doubt Georgetown will be the best place. But let's not spoil your graduation day by arguing any more about it. You know there's no earthly reason to go out of town when we have St. Ignatius College right here in the city."

"Registration, seven hundred! No wonder they say 'If you can't go to college, go to St. Ignatius.'"

"That's not at all funny, Peter." At the moment Caroline felt that she would hardly mind sending Peter out of town to college, though she could never let Paul go so easily. "You'll get exactly the same Jesuit training there as you'd get at Georgetown or Fordham or Holy Cross."

"But St. Ignatius plays its football games on *Sunday*," Paul protested.

"And their schedule sounds like a list of the Joyful Mysteries. Annunciation, Assumption, Nativity — who ever heard of *their* teams?"

"If that's all you're thinking about, why not pick Notre Dame?" Caroline gave an impatient little laugh. "But since neither of you plays football, I don't see what difference all this makes."

"Those things make a lot of difference at their age," said Bob. — "But as you say, we settled the whole thing weeks ago."

"Just think how lucky you are to be going on to college at all." Caroline had found this an effective point before, first in persuading Bob and then the boys to her way of thinking. "Look at poor Joe Militello, working in that soda fountain all summer, while you have a lovely new summer home to enjoy."

"That's the only time you ever have a good word for Joe, Mother, when you're using him as a shining example to us," smiled Peter in that humorous vein of his that Caroline somehow did not enjoy. "You've never forgiven him for getting elected class president."

"I wonder how we'll like Sunrise Point," said Paul, his facile mind more easily diverted.

"It's always been a pretty ritzy place," the doctor observed. "I only hope you'll have as much fun there as you've always had with the young crowd at Crystal Bay."

"Of course they will!" Caroline said as she rose from the table. "You know how common the Bay has been getting of late years. The rent at Sunrise Point is really cheaper, considering the nicer class of boys and girls they'll meet."

"Some of those babes from Lakeport Sem do look pretty nice, at that," Paul agreed. "Did you get an eyeful of that Jordan doll in the paper this morning, Pete?"

"How could I miss her? I'll bet you have her dated the first night we get to Sunrise, you wolf!"

"Could be." A grin of perfect understanding passed between the boys as they followed their parents into the living room and sprawled on the sofa to finish the Sunday

comics. The room, done in shades of blue and white, looked as neat, handsome, and conventional as its mistress.

Strange, she was thinking, to hear my boys talking like that about Bert Jordan's daughter.

"Well, I'll be getting over to the office." Dr. Murray took his panama hat from the front closet. "I'll stop by for you kids about five-thirty. You'll be with Irma, won't you, Caroline?"

"Yes, we're coming right over from the tea."

"Don't forget, we get the car tonight!" Paul called after his departing father.

Taking some newspapers and a large scrapbook from a lower drawer of her secretary, Caroline sat down at the desk and spread them out before her. Bringing her press clippings up to date was usually left till Sunday, for her well-filled weekdays afforded little leisure. Neatly, she scored each item and removed it with the curiously dagger-shaped letter opener that had been Russell's wedding gift. His accompanying message: "I'm sure you'll find many uses for this," she had torn up, but not without amusement. Russell had not lost his sense of humor.

Indeed, they had met quite casually several times before he left for the novitiate house, again a few years later when as a scholastic he was teaching at St. Ignatius High, and, of course, at the gala reception at which the Carmody connections had outdone themselves on the occasion of his first solemn high Mass. Caroline never felt quite at ease with personalities she suspected to be more complex than her own, but after all, since she had tacitly forgiven him for that cruel scene the night of his return from the war, she supposed the least he could do was to "forgive" her for whatever he fancied she had done.

But it was of another phase of Russell's reception that Caroline was reminded now, as she surveyed her clippings of the past week — from the Rosary Society breakfast she had addressed last Sunday morning to the St. Ignatius Mothers' bridge luncheon held under her chairmanship yesterday afternoon. Even in those early years when her ambitions had been bounded only by Lakeport itself, she had been drawn by Bob's position on the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital staff into all the more fashionable forms of Catholic action — but reluctantly then. Was not her religion, or at least the background it implied, the very thing that made every advantage useless as keys to the "best" circles? In Lakeport to be Catholic meant at best to be newly rich, to be descended from nineteenth-century immigrants, usually German or Irish, and therefore to be forever beneath the notice of those whose ancestors, younger branches of the old Puritan lines, had come on from New England to found the city. Caroline had learned this the hard way, in those years of constant frustration and hidden disappointments, which she still blamed for whitening her hair.

At Russell's reception, however, impressed by the numerous political and financial powers present, Caroline could not fail to see that it was precisely because the old, colonial-bred families had lost their material control of the city that they stiffened those invisible barriers against which she had beaten her wings so long in vain. Because Lakeport had become a Catholic city in every other sense, they were all the more determined that it should never become one socially. Thus Catholics themselves were far less solidly united than this Protestant minority, for their large cross section of the population could be classed to-

gether only in the Church Universal. Otherwise what had Irish and Germans, comfortable for a generation or two, in common with the more recently immigrated, still struggling Italians and Poles? The Polish indeed were numerous and self-sufficient enough to form virtually a city of their own, but those pushing Italians Caroline could not abide.

Yet if it was impossible to move even as a commoner among Lakeport's self-appointed queens, surely to be queen over such a powerful body of commoners was a very good next best thing. Sensing all this by instinct rather than by analysis, Caroline with true Straubmeyer efficiency lost no time in realizing the full possibilities of her position in what had come to be called "Catholic society." Typical of her present activities was the last clipping she pasted in:

The annual tea of the Mount Carmel Alumnae Association in honor of the graduating class, to be held Sunday afternoon at three in the Academy in West Virginia Street, will be in charge of the Class of 1914, in accordance with the silver anniversary tradition, Mrs. R. Emmet Murray, the chairman, has announced. As president of the class, Mrs. Murray will head the reception committee, assisted by members of the faculty, including Sister M. Marcella Quinn, also a class officer. The other officers, Hon. Mrs. George J. Hartman and Mrs. Frank X. Straubmeyer, will preside at the urns, assisted in serving by members of the junior class . . .

But Caroline could not put her scrapbook away without a glance at the articles inserted two weeks ago on the opposite page. Of course, golden weddings were only too common in her parents' plain-living, German circle, as the rather perfunctory accounts in the three daily papers testified, but other such couples, even old Mr. and Mrs.

Hartman, never received such notice in the *Catholic Herald*, diocesan weekly. Though few people nowadays associated Mrs. Murray, Catholic clubwoman par excellence, with the Straubmeyer brewery fortune (and as far as she was concerned, the fewer the better), she scarcely minded the necessary explanations in so glowing a tribute to her family. Nor was she averse to such public proof that she was not really as old as her hair might indicate.

To be sure, Uncle Francis was now Vicar-General of the diocese, and Frank — as much through his own importance as a businessman since Repeal as through the influence of his brother-in-law George Hartman — had become Democratic County Chairman. But Caroline felt in all modesty that the elder Straubmeyers owed no small part of their publicity to the happy circumstance of being *her* parents. Indeed, though the secular press was co-operative enough, in the *Herald* the distinguished name of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray appeared at least as often as the bishop's.

Only when a familiar auto horn interrupted her reading did Caroline realize that her sister-in-law was late. From the refrigerator she retrieved the white violets carefully saved from yesterday's luncheon, and pinned them on before the hall mirror. A corsage, she felt, always lent a pleasant touch of formality to any occasion. Then she added a quick touch of lipstick, and powdered her pinked cheeks a little more. The straw sailor hat she tilted on her neatly waved, silvery (thanks to a monthly "sapphire rinse") bob completed her blue and white ensemble.

She liked to wear the Blessed Virgin's colors, she always said, having been born in May. Although all were aware of how well she looked, few people remembered that this

pious custom had been adopted only since her hair had turned white. Like other handicaps she could not effectively conceal, white hair had now been turned to her advantage.

"I'll see you at Grandma's, boys," she said from the doorway. "Don't forget to bring along your white coats to wear when you go dancing afterward."

"Is Janet with Aunt Irma?" asked Peter. "I want to tell her about tonight —"

"There's no time now. You'll see her at dinner. Good-by, dears."

As Caroline approached the car, Janet Straubmeyer stepped out. Her stepfather's surname was in startling contrast to the girl's appearance, for at seventeen she was growing into the dark Irish beauty of the Carmodys, her real father's family.

"Hello, Aunt Caroline," she smiled. "Are the twins all excited about graduating?"

"No, they haven't any more nerves than I have," laughed Caroline, getting into the front seat beside her sister-in-law. "Well, Irma, I've been wondering what was keeping you."

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Carrie."

Would she *never* learn to call her Caroline? The drab, mousy little daughter of a German grocer, Irma Hartman had been very lucky to get one husband, much less two, Caroline always thought. That the second one happened to be Frank was certainly none of Caroline's doing.

"Sister Regina from our convent — the Hurley girl, you know," she was explaining, "wanted to visit her mother this after, so I dropped her and another nun off there first."

Caroline said nothing. It was all very well to accommo-



date the good sisters now and then, but women who made a practice of it, like Irma, only ended by neglecting more important things.

"How many juniors did you get to help with the sandwiches?" she asked, turning to Janet.

"Five, besides me," said the girl.

"That ought to be enough. Not half the alumnae ever show up anyway, even when their own class is entertaining."

"I thought maybe you'd beg off this after," said Irma, "with the boys graduating and all."

"Oh, I wouldn't disappoint the girls. I hope I still have *that* much school spirit left."

Leaving the elm-shaded streets of St. Charles' (with the added dignity of years still smartest of the city's eighty-odd parishes), they drove down the west side, toward a once Irish section that corresponded to the Flower Bed on the other side of Main Street but which had declined far more noticeably. Every second house seemed to have been turned into a barber shop, a fruit stand, or a tavern since the foreigners had taken over, thought Caroline.

As they neared the rambling, red-brick Mount Carmel Academy, considered so handsome when built in the 1870's, she wished more than ever that these nuns would show the enterprise, say, of the Madames of the Sacred Heart, whose Stella Maris Seminary, opened some years ago in a smart northern suburb overlooking the lake, now drew the clientele that had once favored the Mount. Graduates of this institution — generally called "the Sem" to distinguish it from the adjoining college of the same name — did not mind in the least being mistaken for those

of the century-old, nonsectarian Lakeport Seminary, however they might jeer at the latter as "Lakeport Cemetery."

Such were Caroline's thoughts as Irma parked the car, and their little party climbed the stone stairway trod by three generations of schoolgirls. Though Mount Carmel was the oldest and still the largest of Lakeport's half-dozen Catholic academies, its emphasis upon tradition rather than innovation had, Caroline feared, left her alma mater far down the scale of fashion — below even the Mercy Order's St. Ellen's, which served the Irish girls at the south end of the city, and not far above Holy Spirit, on the east side, where Felician nuns taught the daughters of well-to-do Poles.

Parents like Irma were often as vague as the sisters themselves about how the various academies were rated, but Caroline did not need Paul to tell her that eligible boys recognized these distinctions as clearly as the girls who made them; so why Janet should want to come here, Caroline could only wonder. Of course, that was just like Irma. Even though she and Frank lived at the correct end of the city, on Crescent Parkway, like Caroline and Bob, their home was east of Main Street — hence not in St. Charles' parish, but on the northern outskirts of old St. Henry's.

Irma's nostalgic comment, "It doesn't change a bit, does it?" was only too true, thought Caroline, as they walked through the familiar corridor, past statues of saints and portraits of Lakeport's early bishops, to the school auditorium. The chairs had been changed for the day from rows to more casual arrangements; and at the end of the room a long table was set with a large coffee urn at one end, tea service at the other, and stacks of china between.

Sister M. Marcella Quinn at once detached herself from a cluster of junior assistants. Somehow the black habit and severe white wimple made her pointed features look not old but ageless. Her eyebrows were still sandy, and if her once red hair had turned gray, at least no one knew the difference, thought Caroline.

"Hello, Irma! Caroline! — Janet dear, run over and help fix the sandwiches on those trays, will you? The caterer never delivered them till half an hour ago."

"Isn't Loretta here yet?" asked Caroline. She could seldom bring herself to call Rosemary "Sister."

"No, but no one will be arriving just yet, anyway, or if any one does, you and Irma can start pouring." Sister Marcella led them over to the table, where Irma seated herself behind the tea service — though Caroline had no intention of taking the corresponding place at the coffee. "Did the twins tell you, Carrie, I ran into them one day last week at the main library? I could hardly believe they're graduating from high school."

"Oh, yes, with honors, too," said Caroline.

"Won't it be grand for Bob," the nun went on, "having Peter a doctor, to help him out when he gets back to private practice?"

"Of course, I thought it would be nice if Peter were going to be a lawyer, in partnership with Paul," Caroline admitted, "but it's what he wants that counts."

She sincerely believed that she loved both her sons equally well, and that it was only a sense of justice that made her put in a word for Paul whenever someone praised Peter. After all, any mother liked to insure proper appreciation for the child who most resembled her.

"How's your degree coming, Sister?" Irma was asking.

"Oh, slow as ever. I'm practically a fixture in those St. Ignatius extension courses. But after this summer session I'll need only six more hours and my thesis."

"It must be hard," said Irma — with the naïvete of a person who had not gone to college, thought Caroline.

"Oh, no," laughed the nun, "just monotonous. Most of those education courses are full of football players who couldn't pass anything else. But even when I do get my Master's, Mother Celestine threatens to send me down to Catholic University for a Ph.D."

"How nice, to be so close to Trinity again," said Caroline, lest anyone forget the Trinity degree that set her off from mere alumnae of the Mount.

"I'd really rather teach here, though."

That was the sort of attitude that left Rosemary right where she was, with all her brains, thought Caroline.

"Hello, girls, sorry to be so late!" Loretta Hartman bustled across the room. Even in her plump and florid forties she was a pleasant-faced woman, obviously pretty not so long ago — though her brother Bert had really had all the looks of the Jordan family, Caroline always thought. But at least Loretta never let George's office go to her head, Caroline would say that for her; in fact, some people might think the wife of Lakeport's mayor ought to be a little more — well, dignified.

"Another of those official luncheons, you know," she explained, taking her place at the coffee urn. Her indifference to the social demands of her position was not assumed, Caroline knew, but at times it did seem a trifle overdone. "What a week! All the places George had to appear, and then Pat graduating . . ." Loretta paused uncomfortably.

"Where are you going to send her to college?" asked Sister Marcella, just as smoothly as if Pat were graduating from the Mount, like the daughters of most alumnae, instead of from Stella Maris Seminary.

"We let her have her own way too much," said Loretta by way of apology, "but for once she seems to be making a sensible choice. Till lately it was a tossup between Manhattanville and Trinity, but she's finally decided on Stella Maris, after all. George and I are so pleased, we even bought her that new convertible she's been wanting, for a graduation present."

Smart girl, Pat, thought Caroline. No wonder she and Paul got along so well. At the local college, attended by most of the academy graduates who pursued any further education, Pat's diploma from the neighboring "Sem" would mean more in every way than it possibly could in another city. College out of town, Caroline knew but too well, was likely to rouse ambitions that could never be satisfied in Lakeport. That was one reason why she wanted her boys to attend St. Ignatius, she told herself; that and a perfectly natural preference for a school in whose life she could more or less share as she had done in their parochial and high school days.

The guests were beginning to arrive now — mostly this year's graduates and women from the class of 1914, with only a sprinkling of those from other classes — to be received first by Mother Celestine and the line of smiling nuns at the door and then passed on to the hostesses. With practiced urbanity Caroline dispensed gracious small talk as she led the alumnae over to the table, handed out cups and saucers, or kept the juniors circulating with the sandwiches. These reunions, she decided, were getting almost

as common as the mothers' clubs, to which practically anyone could belong. If the Mount was still the largest academy, this was only because its low tuition made it the least discriminate. Caroline was especially appalled by the number of Italian girls among the more recent classes, and at the first opportunity said as much to Loretta.

"That's this neighborhood for you," Loretta agreed. "Just what my Pat said three years ago when she made us transfer her to the Sem. Honest, kids nowadays know more than we do!"

They stopped talking as a thin, swarthy girl, dressed far too loudly for the occasion, approached Irma's end of the table.

"Say, Mrs. Staubmeyer," she said with a giggle that carried even beyond where Caroline stood, "don't us juniors get any tea to keep up our stren'th?"

"Well, you certainly do, Rita." Irma smiled, filling a cup. "How many lumps? Oh, Carrie, come over here a minutel You ought to know this little girl. Mrs. Murray, this is Rita Militello — the doctor's girl, you know."

"Of course. How do you do, Rita?" Caroline walked over to meet her, but did not extend her hand. Surely Irma must know as well as she that Dr. Militello's appointment as Deputy Health Commissioner had been nothing but a political sop to the Italian voters, as loudly represented by two councilmen of that nationality. That was no reason to treat his family like social equals. Even now the Militellos just about made ends meet, Caroline had gathered, though they *would* keep all their countless children in Catholic schools at any cost.

"I'm awful glad to meet you, Mrs. Murray." Rita grinned her wide, nervous grin, eyes shining like black shoe but-

tons. "My mother told me to look you up today if I got the chance."

"Did she?" said Caroline. Mrs. Militello never mingled with the other official wives as such; parish block parties and Friday night bingo were obviously her proper field. For her son Joe's sake, however, she had joined the St. Ignatius Mothers' Club, and only yesterday, at the bridge luncheon, had clung to Caroline like a long-lost sister, apparently presuming on their husbands' professional connection. No one *but* fat, greasy Mrs. Militello could have such a graceless daughter as the girl who stood before her, Caroline told herself.

"Gee, I think it's just wonderful," Rita gushed on — in English little better than her mother's, Caroline noted — "all that stuff you do for Catholic action and everything."

"Oh, no!" Smiling modestly, Caroline made her usual protest. "Not at all! I just try to do my part. I feel there's something everyone can do — only some of us don't recognize it."

"Well, gee, you certainly do!" Rita made the obvious response. "I always tell Janet how lucky she is having you for an aunt and those twins of yours for cousins. My brother Joe says . . ."

The volatile temperament Caroline had learned to tolerate in her Irish friends she still found quite insufferable in its less restrained form among Italians. Even the stolid, phlegmatic Poles were more like Germans, and *they* at least kept in their place. She was about to end the conversation by the quickest possible means when Rita herself broke off and rather hastily withdrew, apparently checked by the return of Sister Marcella to the table.

"Were you getting the ear talked off of you?" asked the

nun with a smile. "Thank goodness all our girls aren't chatterboxes like Rita."

"Oh, they're cute, most of them," Irma put in. "I was just thinking how sweet they all look. Much nicer than we did, with our hair bows and sailor suits."

"It was strange, wasn't it," Sister Marcella observed, "that very Sunday the class of 1889 entertained for us, while we sat here planning out our lives, that Austrian archduke was assassinated. I wonder what devilment is brewing over there now."

"Why? All the countries are sending exhibits to the World's Fair, aren't they?" said Caroline, to settle the subject. Foreign affairs bored her. "Anyhow, we'd never let ourselves be dragged in again."

"Maybe," said Sister Marcella as they walked back toward the coffee urn. "But I'll bet the King and Queen of England didn't come over here just for the trip. By the way, Loretta, you haven't told us how it felt to meet Their Britannic Majesties."

"Oh, I'm afraid Pat got more of a kick out of it than George or I," laughed Loretta. "The Queen did seem very nice, but, of course, we were only talking there a few minutes at the train. What tickled me most was my dear sister-in-law Miriam having to call *me* up to see if I could have her presented."

"How it must have galled her to do it," said Caroline with satisfaction, "after never keeping in touch with you since Bert died."

She could say "since Bert died" quite casually now, without a ghost of the conflicting emotions she had felt that winter night in 1930, when lurid headlines shrieked to all Lakeport that Albert Jordan, prominent banker and



clubman, had shot to death one Larry Carmody, believed to be his bootlegger, and then killed himself. A drunken quarrel over unpaid bills, everyone knew, for Bert had been drinking steadily since losing so much of Miriam's money in the market crash.

Amid horrified pity deeper than anyone suspected, Caroline yet could not suppress a certain sense of triumph at the obvious futility of the life for which Bert had given up her and his religion. Secretly, she hoped that even the Keith prestige would not survive such an unsavory scandal, but in this she was disappointed; Miriam's position in Lakeport society was still unquestioned.

Caroline wondered now if Irma, too, was reminded, for although she had been separated from Larry since shortly after Janet's birth, only the Jordan tragedy had at last freed her to marry Frank — over Caroline's strenuous protests.

"All I hope —" Sister Marcella was restoring the conversation to an international plane — "is that the new Pope may be diplomat enough to prevent any trouble this time."

"Just the same," Loretta observed, "George was saying only this morning, with things in Europe the way they are, the party wouldn't dare even run anyone with a German name for mayor this year. You know how clannish the Polish are."

Caroline had not thought of that before. Though by now Poles made up nearly a third of the city, they were mostly laborers and small businessmen, with professionals conspicuous by their rareness. In short, they were still in the position in which the Irish and German immigrants had found themselves two generations before, and from which the Italians were just emerging. Having developed

few leaders of their own as yet in proportion to their numbers, the Polish were ardently courted each fall by both major political parties, but otherwise they kept to themselves, set in their European customs and vitally interested in all that concerned Poland.

"Surely Hartman isn't too German a name," Sister Marcella was saying

"No," Loretta explained, "but don't forget, according to the city charter no mayor can succeed himself. So the party's in a spot. The Poles don't trust Irish Democrats, you know, after some of those deals Mayor Hogan pulled back in the Twenties, and we all know who the other big shots are — Dieterle, Schenck, Reinhardt, and all the rest."

"Well, that lets Frank out," said Irma cheerfully, overhearing the conversation in a lull at her end of the table. "I was afraid he might run, and I know I could never stand the gaff the way you have, Loretta."

"Don't think I won't be glad to be out of it! But George's administration has been so popular, the way we feel is, we'd hate to see the party lose out now just because the Republicans can produce some descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers."

"Frank says they'll break their necks to win this election, too," Irma added. "They think it'll be a test vote of the way the city'll go in the state and presidential elections next year."

Caroline's smile was fixed and her hand not quite steady as she passed a cup and saucer to someone — she had no idea whom. The inspiration that had just come to her opened such a new world — the one in which she had always belonged, really — that she could scarcely contain herself. A candidate prominent in the party was needed,

Loretta had said, with a name neither too German nor too Irish. Who, then, so suitable as Health Commissioner Murray, capable, well known, respected throughout the city?

The infinite possibilities of the thing flashed through Caroline's mind in dazzling array. The position that Irma dreaded, that Loretta would toss carelessly aside, to her would offer opportunities denied for a lifetime. Surely Miriam's humbling herself to call Loretta was proof supreme that those who slighted the mayor's wife only spited themselves.

Caroline's intuitive desire to keep the twins in town had been more right than she knew. What an asset they would be, with their charm and popularity! She was not one to count her chickens before they were hatched; she had never even let herself toy with such an idea before. But here she felt sure, was her heaven-sent opportunity to become First Lady of Lakeport — *all* Lakeport. There was a great deal to be done, of course. Still, given a fair chance, she had never lacked confidence in her own powers, and here everything was in her favor. Yes, she asked herself, why not? Why not indeed?

Lost in such delightful plans, Caroline's attention to the rest of the tea became purely mechanical, until presently she noticed that people had begun to leave. No one should know Bob's abilities better than the man he had served as Health Commissioner, but still one could not make too sure, for without the mayor's support no candidate would even get the nomination. She went toward Loretta with a smile of the most affectionate intimacy.

"You mustn't neglect us this summer, you know," she said, "just because we'll be a little farther out than Crystal

Bay. Bob and I were wondering only this morning what you and George are doing over the week end of the Fourth. We're moving out next Saturday — the first."

"Well, we expect to fly down to the Fair for the week end itself. But then George has to be back Tuesday to make the usual speeches all over the city. Honest, I'll bet something will come up even to spoil our two weeks away in August."

"But couldn't you get away the *evening* of the Fourth?" Caroline persisted. "It's hardly thirty miles to Sunrise Point, you know."

"Yes, I was out there once when Bert was alive. It's awfully nice of you to ask us, Caroline. Maybe we could drive out after dinner."

"Well, if that's the best you can do!" Caroline beamed. "And be sure to bring dear Pat. Paul will love to have her."

"And she'll love to come," Loretta added. "She usually likes to act bored with the boys, but I can tell she's tickled pink to be stepping out with Paul tonight."

"Isn't that sweet? They seem to get along so well, too."

"Yes, I think they make such a cute couple."

The room was almost empty by now. When the last loiterers had left, Sister Marcella accompanied the three hostesses and Janet along the corridor toward the door.

"Can we drop you anywhere, Loretta?" asked Irma — foolishly, thought Caroline, for Loretta was not likely to be going their way. "I know you haven't got your car, 'cause today was George's turn to drive Frank out to the country club."

"Thanks, Irma, but Pat's picking me up here. Driving anywhere in the new convertible is still a novelty to her."

"Well, I think the seniors ought to be very much

pleased with their tea," said Sister Marcella at the door. "It was lovely of you girls to run it off so nicely. By the way, I don't suppose any of you could come down Wednesday afternoon and help us arrange the flowers and things for commencement?"

"Wednesday?" Caroline looked distressed. "Oh, I'm so sorry, that's the day the Catholic Charities Board meets, and, of course, being the first woman appointed, I don't know what the bishop would think if I missed that." No need to explain that the meeting would be in the morning; whatever she did with the afternoon would surely be more worth her while than helping a lot of nuns try to disguise the auditorium of this hopelessly outmoded school. "I will try to send some roses from our garden, though."

"That's sweet of you, Carrie," said Sister Marcella.

"I'm afraid I'm all tied up Wednesday, too," laughed Loretta, "with a meeting of the Lakeport Women's Society for the Prevention of Movies or some fool thing like that."

"I'm not doing anything, Sister," said Irma. "I'd love to help."

"Really, Irma," said Caroline as they walked down the outside stairs, "the things you do for those nuns! Aren't you afraid people will think you're trying to get a stand-in for Janet?"

"Maybe I do help them too much," said Irma, to whom the unpleasant thought had never occurred.

"Don't worry, Mother." The look that Janet shot at Caroline was hardly that of a loving niece. "The kids know I don't need anyone to polish the apple for me."

Displeased that the girl should show more spirit than her mother, Caroline wondered if it was from Janet that

Peter had picked up that independent way of questioning what his elders said. They were certainly together enough — too much, in fact, though at present there seemed no good excuse for interfering.

"What a smooth car!" Janet exclaimed, as a maroon convertible, top down, whirled around the corner, sounded its four-noted horn, and slid to a stop before the Academy.

The willowy girl at the wheel huskily answered the others' greetings. "Hello, folks!" she called with a toss of her chestnut page-boy bob. The large handbag strapped over one shoulder of her white sharkskin suit just matched the red leather cushions of the seat.

Pat Hartman's pert, faintly freckled features had none of her cousin Janet's soft, dimpled prettiness, Caroline had to admit, but, like all those Sem girls, she was always groomed to the very tips of her long, scarlet fingernails.

"Are you coming to the graduation tonight, Pat?" Janet asked, when she had finished admiring the car.

"Not if I can help it! My own graduation was enough for one week. Anyhow, I wouldn't want to come downtown so early in a formal."

"Oh, are you going to wear a formal when we go out?"

"But of course!" Pat's eyebrows rose slightly. "With the fellows in summer tuxes —"

"Yes, of course," Janet agreed quickly. "I'll wear my hoopskirt if Peter will drop me at our house after the exercises, so I can change."

"Do that," said Pat, opening the car door for her mother. "See you tonight, then."

In three sweeping movements, the convertible made a U-turn in the narrow street and shot northward.

If there was one thing deader than the Flower Bed normally, thought Caroline as Irma drove across Main Street, it was the Flower Bed on a Sunday. Any car more modern than an electric really looked out of place in narrow, cobbled Tulip Street, which paralleled Main a few blocks to the east, descending southward beneath its arch of elms from the hill on which the "best" homes stood. The best looked none too good to Caroline; the staid, brick houses, with their neat little lawns, seemed to have grown smaller since her childhood; but at least, in its conservative German way, the section was better preserved than that from which she had just come. Even the homes of the Polish families who had begun to filter in from the east side looked no different from those still occupied by the original owners — though Caroline had thought it high time her parents moved when the first one appeared.

"Ach, Miss Carrie, for a long time you ain't been by us," said old Anna, as she opened the door of the Straubmeyer house.

"Why it's hardly two weeks since the golden wedding," laughed Caroline, handing her the corsage to put on ice. Anyway, these family dinners every other Sunday were certainly all any parents could ask of married children. She turned to kiss her mother, who came hurrying in from the kitchen, wiping her hands on the inevitable apron. Even now her hair was hardly as white as her daughter's.

"Mama darling, what *were* you doing in the kitchen?" Caroline put her hat on the hall table. "Surely, Anna knows how to get Sunday dinner by now."

Louisa Straubmeyer laughed. "Ach, that one still can't

make apple strudel the way the boys like. For your Papa, yes, she is good enough, but not for my Peter and Paul."

"You'll spoil them yet," said Caroline good-naturedly, as, followed by Irma and Janet, they walked between the green velvet portieres into the back parlor, which, despite all Caroline's tactful gifts, was still far from a modern living room. The dark, flowered wallpaper was almost entirely covered by framed family photographs, perpetuating every occasion from Louisa's first Communion down to the twins' current graduation. When the three men and the boys — the latter two looking handsome but warm in their tuxedos — had greeted the women, Louisa returned to the kitchen and the others settled about the room — Janet next to Peter, Caroline noticed.

"Well, Carrie —" Julius Straubmeyer, bald, stocky, upright as ever, was pontificating from his usual morris chair. "I was just now tellin' Bob here you're doin' a smart thing sendin' these fellers to St. Ignatius College. Monsignor says it's as good as any place in the country — and cheaper."

"I'm so glad he thinks so," said Caroline, though she felt that her uncle was bound to be prejudiced in favor of his own alma mater. "I thought perhaps you'd have him over here to dinner today."

"We asked him, but Father McGrath asked him first, down to the high school, to eat with the priests there."

"Can you let me stop at our house tonight so I can change into a formal?" Caroline heard Janet asking Peter. "Pat's wearing one."

"Sure," said Peter. "We can get Pat and then come back for you. I hope Joe Militello's date thinks to come formal. They're going to meet us at the Adios."



"Oh, that'll be nice. His sister Rita's in my class at school."

Sitting beside Caroline on the horsehair sofa, Irma, too, was following this conversation, while across the room the three older men talked. Paul stood by the open piano bench, leafing through the sheet music, but he was not one to be left out of anything for long.

"Say, Aunt Irma," he said, "how about giving us some dinner music, if I can find anything here swingier than *The Maiden's Prayer*."

"There are some pieces of mine there somewhere, Paul," Janet suggested. "Grandma Straubmeyer still likes to have me come in and play for her after school sometimes, you know."

"Good," said Paul. "Oh, yes, here's the *Beer Barrel Polka*."

"Oh, Paul, not that!" pleaded Caroline, for whom the very title had unpleasant associations.

"How about *Our Love*?"

"Where would the Hit Parade be without Tchaikovsky?" murmured Peter.

The latest classical adaptation satisfied all four interested, so Irma went over to the upright piano, pleased at the acknowledgment of her talent — in Caroline's opinion, her one talent.

While the twins, Janet, and Irma herself joined in the chorus of *Our Love*, Caroline did not fail to notice that her father's all too familiar views on the state of the nation, patiently attended by Bob, were obviously boring Frank. Catching the latter's eye with an understanding smile, she indicated the place Irma had just left, and Frank gladly came over to join her.

"Well, how's my only brother these days?" she asked. "I haven't seen you since the golden wedding."

"Oh, fit as a fiddle!" said Frank in his hearty way. Despite all efforts, he was falling into fat like their father, Caroline noticed, glad that Bob at least had kept his figure. "But I keep pretty busy, you know, between business and politics."

"Politics?" echoed Caroline, as if taking polite interest in his concerns. "So early in the year?"

"Early! We've been planning for the next election since last January. It just about ruined our game out at Crystal Bay today. Here it is June, and we still can't hit on anyone for mayor that'll please everybody."

"I suppose with the Polish people feeling the way they do, you couldn't very well run any of the German fellows, could you?"

"You said it," Frank agreed, surprised at such native political astuteness. "And on the other hand, no Irishman has ever got far since Hogan's term; they were all in his crowd, you know."

"It's so unfair," said Caroline, "to judge people by their nationalities when we're all Americans now. But if that's the way it's done, I suppose you'll just have to act accordingly."

"We sure will." Frank warmed to his subject, glad to explain something on which he was better informed than his self-possessed older sister, with her college education. Irma had swung into *Wishing* by now, so that the conversation between her husband and Caroline still remained strictly private.

"Too bad," said Caroline lightly, "that with a name like Murray, you couldn't persuade Bob to run! Of

course, we'd both hate the responsibility — I know what Loretta has gone through — but after all, the party *has* done a good deal for us."

"We never thought of Bob," said Frank. "Somehow you just don't think of a doctor as mayor."

"No," Caroline agreed, "you don't. I've often wondered how that Elias Keith ever got himself elected first mayor of Lakeport. He was a doctor, you know."

"That's right," Frank recalled. "So he was."

"And it's not as if Bob weren't a good speaker." Caroline toyed idly with the silver chain of her pince-nez. "You'll hear him at the exercises tonight. In a way, I think it would be almost selfish of him not to run, if the party really needed him."

"Oh, well," said Frank, "if he'd rather not, I suppose there's no use even bringing it up. I'll never forget what a time George had, even getting him to accept as Health Commissioner."

Neither would Caroline forget. Bob would never know what a part her friendship with Loretta had played in that appointment, for which Caroline allowed him to credit — or blame — Irma's influence on her brother.

"And look what a fine Commissioner he's made," Caroline countered. "Of course, I wouldn't try to influence him one way or the other, but I really don't see how he could refuse the party anything within reason, after all you and George have done for him."

"Yeah," said Frank thoughtfully. "When you look at it that way, it'd be the least he could do."

Thus, under cover of the wistful strains of *Wishing*, was launched the "Murray For Mayor" boom. Having sown

the seed, Caroline thought it best to drop the subject now, as her mother announced what she still called "supper."

The dining room showed even less of Caroline's touch than the parlor; not a potted plant in the bay window, not a hand-painted dish on the black-walnut sideboard (flanked by two very still lifes of recently killed fowl and fish) seemed to have changed. The ceiling lamp, with its bead-fringed, green-glass shade, still hung over the exact center of the table, Caroline noted, as her father said grace. When all were seated, Janet was again next to Peter, though more by his arrangement than hers, Caroline had to admit.

"How good of Anna to make this for us on such a warm day," Irma remarked, after her first sip of Anna's famous noodle soup. Caroline had just been thinking that in such weather a hot meal showed very poor taste, though in this cool, dark room the canons of taste did not keep her from enjoying the soup.

"You women! All afternoon you been eating at that party, and still you can eat more?" Caroline's father laughed at his own pleasantry — his usual heavy-handed humor, she considered it.

"I hardly touched a thing at the tea," she said.

"That's right, she didn't," Irma confirmed. "I did, though. I just couldn't keep away from those little sandwiches. Isn't it funny, no matter how much I eat I never seem to get any fatter!"

"I've told you before, Irma, I'd be worried about that if I were you. It's not normal," said Caroline, who had to watch her weight constantly. She allowed herself this biweekly departure from her carefully caloric diet only

to humor her mother, she always explained, for she liked to think that she had lost all taste for the hearty German cooking on which she had been raised. Still, she made no protest when her father heaped her plate as full as anyone else's.

The plates, she observed, were not of the gold-edged set that had been the somewhat impractical gift of Frank and Irma on the occasion of the anniversary. No doubt they were being "saved," like all the good things she and Frank ever gave their parents. Saved for what? she wondered. Personal gifts seemed to be the only ones they used; at least, her mother was wearing the gold earrings and brooch, and her father the gold cuff links given them by the Murrays.

"This meat is swell," said Peter when he had eaten some. "I'll bet you had a hand in cooking it, Grandma."

"And I bet you win your bet," chuckled his grandfather, beaming about the table. He liked nothing better than presiding at dinner, surrounded by his family. "I can tell, too. It ain't for no reason that down by St. Henry's lawn fete everybody always wants more of Mrs. Straubmeyer's pork roast."

"Papa, you make me blush!" laughed the old lady.

Poor Mama, thought Caroline. That sort of thing had always been the extent of her activities for the Church — slaving over a hot stove in the parish hall kitchen. And for what? "Refreshments were in charge of the ladies of the L.C.B.A. A good time was had by all."

Thorough eaters that they were, all the Straubmeyers soon fell to their food with little conversation beyond necessary requests, until presently they sat back contented, as Anna brought in the coffee. Caroline was

unable to restrain her mother from going into the kitchen herself to arrange the cheese on the apple strudel, which she carried in proudly a moment later.

"You three kids won't taste nothin' half so good wherever you go tonight after the graduation," said Julius.

"You said a mouthful, Gramps," Paul agreed.

"Oh, we never get much to eat, anyway, except maybe after a dance," Janet explained.

The way the whole family now took it for granted that where Peter went, Janet went, vexed Caroline more all the time. Perhaps they were even encouraging the idea, with an eye to keeping Frank's money in the family, but, knowing she would inherit just as much some day, Caroline did not care in the least about that. Of course, Peter had always been the shyder of the twins, and when first they had begun to go out, it had seemed natural enough and rather sweet for him to take Janet, who, like a sister, had taught him to dance.

But now that the Murray twins could have their pick of the city's academies — even the Sem, as proved by Paul's conquest of Pat Hartman — Caroline considered it not only stubborn of Peter but downright embarrassing to cling to a girl who was his first cousin in everything but actual blood. And from the Mount, of all places! In no respect did Caroline feel the difference between her sons more than in their choice of girl friends.

There was no time to linger over dessert now; both the boys and Bob had to be at the scene of the exercises before the others, and naturally, Caroline was riding with them. Thus they rose, and with many arrangements for finding each other in the crowd later, Murrays and Straubmeyers parted. As they drove toward the down-

town section, Caroline could not help feeling pleasantly elated. Tonight would indeed be a milestone, in more ways than the rest of the family suspected.

When Bob had found the nearest parking lot, Caroline realized again how glad she was that St. Ignatius held its commencements in the substantial Knights of Columbus auditorium. Unlike the college, handsomely situated in northern Lakeport, the Jesuit church and high school (though its prestige still outclassed its only rival, run by the Christian Brothers) were of the vintage of the Mount, and, worse still, located almost on top of the large, downtown Seneca Market, where Louisa Straubmeyer as a girl had worked in the family meat stall even now run by some of her relatives. This was a spot Caroline shunned like the plague, especially when there was any possibility of its putting her mother in a reminiscent mood.

The lobby of the auditorium was already crowding. While the twins hurried off to the room assigned, Caroline, on Bob's arm, smiled graciously at many friends and acquaintances made through the Mothers' Club, but the smile contracted and became a mere distant nod as she caught sight of Dr. and Mrs. Militello, surrounded by children ranging from Rita on down. The doctor, with skin darker than his iron-gray hair, looked as dapper as ever, but his wife's black velvet hat, adorned by a purple veil and some incredibly bright cherries, made Caroline want to shriek. She could practically hear a hand-organ playing *O Sole Mio*.

After escorting her to a seat in the very first row — only her due, she felt, as wife of the speaker and mother of two graduates — Bob left Caroline. Since she could

not see anyone else coming in, she tried to concentrate on reading the program. Where did some parents find such weird middle names for their sons? she wondered, glad that Paul Julius and Peter Francis sounded more sensible than most.

For want of anything better to do, she counted the names of each of the four leading nationalities and then calculated its percentage in the class. Yes, thank heaven, respectable German and Irish names still predominated, she reflected, but this only renewed her lingering resentment that Joe Militello had been chosen valedictorian. And surely, his election as class president could have been circumvented in some way. It looked so vulgar to let an Italian speak for the graduating class of what was supposed to be a nice private school. But then priests, even Jesuits, at times seemed to show no social sense whatever.

Desperate with boredom, Caroline had virtually memorized the program by the time Father McGrath appeared from the wings, followed by Monsignor Straubmeyer and Bob. Taking his seat in the center of the stage as the presiding representative of the bishop, the white-haired Monsignor, in the crimson robes of a domestic prelate, looked almost like a cardinal. Father McGrath sat on his right, and on his left Dr. Murray gazed thoughtfully out over the large audience, which rose, in a body, as the school band opened the exercises with the national anthem.

Then, to the strains of Chopin's *Military Polonaise*, came the graduates, two by two, self-conscious in their tuxedos, marching slowly down the center aisle past row after row of relatives and friends smiling encouragement.



Caroline glowed with pride as Peter and Paul, their boyish faces in set smiles, walked up the stairs to the flower-banked stage. Her boys, she thought — stepping over the threshold of the life she was planning for them! How they would enjoy being known as the mayor's sons! At least Paul would, she was sure.

After the salutorian's conventional greeting (Paul should have at least given that, Caroline thought, but probably the priests did not want to honor him and not Peter, so neither of them was chosen), and Father McGrath's introductory remarks, Dr. Murray rose and came to the front of the stage. His calm manner and professional poise won him instant attention, but Caroline held her breath until he began to speak. What suitable sentiments he expressed, she did not care; she only hoped that Frank was listening with the same purpose as she was. Controlling a mad impulse to turn around and see where Frank was sitting, she kept her hands clenched in her lap until Bob sat down, amid sincere and hearty applause.

Her jaws ached with suppressed yawns throughout Joe Militello's naïvely idealistic valedictory and the endless presentation of diplomas, but at the award of honors her interest revived. Paul received a medal for his English work and Peter one for science. When the recessional music had died away and the last graduates had filed out, Caroline made her way to the milling lobby, where she managed to find Frank's family and learn that her parents were riding home with Monsignor. Bob joined them presently, and they stood waiting for the twins.

Many of the audience, even strangers, stopped to congratulate Dr. Murray on his address. Standing modestly in the background with Irma, Caroline had

to nudge Frank more than once to make sure that he caught the more enthusiastic comments. But after all, this was not the best moment to broach the subject. Gazing about her, Caroline studiously ignored the Militellos, gathered near by in the midst of a foreign-looking group; but, of course, when Bob saw them, he insisted on going over to speak to the doctor and bringing her with him.

"Congratulations, Joe." Caroline smiled her sweetest, while the two men talked, just to show there were no hard feelings. "I'm afraid that speech of yours quite outshone the doctor's."

"Well, thanks, Mrs. Murray." Joe returned her smile uneasily, not knowing how to take her remark. He was rather nice-looking in a childish way, she thought, with his curly, black hair and guileless countenance. "Pete and Paul will be along in a few minutes."

Caroline turned to Mrs. Militello. It was hard to believe that this shapeless woman in rusty black was actually younger than she, and yet when her family, the Coppolas, among the first west side Italians, had kept a candy store near the Mount in Caroline's day, Teresa had still been one of the smaller children. And look at her now! All she needed was a shawl over her head. Aloud Caroline said, "How proud you must be tonight!"

"Oh, yes." The woman was obviously trying to be modest. "But we have the graduations every year. With so many children, Mrs. Murray, always there is something."

"No doubt," said Caroline. "I suppose Joe will go right into the Pre-Med course at St. Ignatius next year?"

She certainly hoped so, for thus Peter and Paul, who planned to take the full four-year Arts course, would not

be thrown with Joe so much—not at all after their sophomore year, when Pre-Med students went on to medical school.

Overhearing the question, Dr. Militello turned.

“Oh, no, Mrs. Murray!” he snapped in his explosive way. “Our Joe’s going to get his A.B. degree just like your boys. It’s something I never got a chance to do. Doctors have got to be more educated nowadays.”

“How true!” said Caroline. It was getting so that literally *anyone* could take a degree at St. Ignatius, she thought in annoyance. She had never liked the aggressive little doctor, anyway. His prominence in the Lakeport Knights of Columbus seemed to her only another sign of the deplorable trend of Catholic society—a warning, indeed, that it was high time to leave this commonplace sphere of card parties and Communion breakfasts for that of coming-out parties and hunt breakfasts.

“That way I’ll have to work my way through, with an NYA job,” Joe explained.

“That won’t be easy, will it, Joe?” Caroline’s voice held the brisk chill of an icy wind.

“No, but I’ll manage,” the boy replied.

“I’m sure you will, somehow,” Caroline purred. She saw that Rita was edging over to talk to her, so, pressing Bob’s arm, she said, “The boys are waiting for us, dear.”

As she withdrew, her pointed gaze at Mrs. Militello’s hat was not lost on anyone but its victim.

“Hello, Mother,” Paul laughed as his parents approached. “We thought you’d left us for Joe.”

“Oh, darlings, never that!” Caroline answered, and then kissed both boys. “You did splendidly tonight.”

They looked nicer than ever now, with their white

coats, maroon bow ties and matching feather boutonnieres, she thought, contrasting them with Joe in his evidently rented tuxedo.

"It was nice of you to go over to Mrs. Militello, Mother," said Peter. "Joe says she thinks you're the nicest lady she ever met."

"Well, she probably doesn't meet many ladies." Caroline let her son interpret that remark as he would, while he walked ahead with Janet. It was now that Frank saw his opportunity.

"Well, Bob," he began, "that speech of yours certainly convinced me."

"Of what? — that we must never forget the teachings of our youth? That was about all I said."

"No, no, I don't even know what you said. It was the way you said it. I mean it convinced me you may be the best man the party could find to run for mayor."

In his amazement Bob almost dropped the twins' tuxedo jackets, which he was carrying over one arm. "Me? Run for mayor? You're not kidding? Good Lord, Frank what ever put that into your head?"

"Now, dear," said Caroline lightly, "don't you give Frank credit for any original ideas?"

"It just came to me while I listened to you," Frank explained, quite ready to acknowledge such a political inspiration as his own. "The way you held this audience with just a commencement speech, think what you could do if you really had something to say."

"But you know how I hate making speeches," Bob protested. "Anyway, with my health not 100 per cent, how could I make any kind of a campaign? Better forget it, Frank."

"Why, dear, I'll bet it wouldn't be half as hard on you as your tiresome old practice," Caroline suggested. "Of course, we'd all rather you just went on being Commissioner, but if the party loses out, you won't even be that."

"That's right," Frank added. "We've got to get someone, and soon. You may be our last hope."

"There must be someone else —"

"I know what!" Caroline broke in. "Why don't you and Irma come out to Sunrise Point with us over the week end of the Fourth, Frank? Then you can explain the whole thing to us, and maybe we could be convinced."

"Fine!" said Frank. The doctor was still silent as they moved toward the entrance. It was then Caroline saw that the dark-haired priest standing near by with Father McGrath was Russell Carmody. Quickly she turned her head away; she had wasted enough time on unimportant people for one day. But even as she walked, she knew his eyes were on her, and when she reached the door, she could no longer avoid his glance. She let the others go on ahead; you never could tell what he might say or to whom.

"Hello, Caroline!" Russell smiled as he shook her hand. "I was asking Irma about you earlier this evening."

"How are you, Father Russell?" she inquired, adopting the usual compromise form of address for priests once called by their first names.

"Very well indeed, Caroline," Russell's brown eyes twinkled. "And how is the guiding light of the St. Ignatius mothers?"

His pleasant tone took any sting out of the words, but Caroline did not like such remarks, coming from him.

"I see you're well informed," she said.

"Well, one can hardly be in Lakeport any time at all without hearing about Mrs. R. Emmett Murray."

He had really aged very little, she thought, but his years as a Jesuit seemed to have given him a kind of serene inner poise he had certainly never had as a boy. Indeed, his whole manner reflected such quiet content that Caroline found it disturbing — as if in giving up so much he had somehow gained more from life than she would ever have. She had an odd feeling that even if she should get everything she thought she wanted now, she would never be as deeply satisfied with her lot as Russell was with his. Such a doubt as to the values of her world was so rare for Caroline that she felt a chill of alarm. Why did Russell always make her see herself in such a different way from anyone else?

"Will you be in Lakeport long, Father?" she asked.

"Not at present. But I've been assigned to St. Ignatius College for the next year, as you probably saw in the paper today."

"I didn't have time to look at anything but the society section," she said, and immediately regretted it. A perfectly innocent remark, she told herself furiously, yet she felt as if she had betrayed herself, though Russell said nothing. His news came as something of a shock. Then she took hold of herself. Even if she could never tell what he was thinking, what had she to fear from him? Probably he had long since forgotten his bitter words on that night twenty years ago. It was absurd to feel that inwardly he was still looking at her as he had then. The only reason the episode still stood out in her mind at all was that no one else had ever said such things to

her before or since. Before she could get away from Russell, Peter and Paul returned, looking for her.

"Oh, there you are, Mother," said Paul. "The folks are waiting."

"Well, well," said Russell, "so these are the famous Murray twins. I thought I recognized them at the breakfast this morning."

"Yes, these are the twins," said Caroline. "Peter and Paul, this is Father Russell Carmody, whom you've heard so much about."

"I suppose you boys will be going to a Jesuit college?" asked the priest when the introduction had been acknowledged. "Georgetown, perhaps?"

"Not quite," said Peter. "We're going to St. Ignatius."

"Isn't that splendid!" Russell looked genuinely pleased. "I'll be teaching psychology there next year."

"Maybe we'll have you in class," said Paul.

"I hardly think so. But anyway —" he smiled at their mother — "I'll keep an eye on them for you, Caroline."

Again she felt that slight uneasiness. She still did not know quite how to take Russell, but she did know that she resented — almost dreaded — his having anything to do with anything of hers. The fact that the twins obviously liked him in no way relieved her uncomfortable impression, and she took them away as quickly as possible.

As the boys led her to where Frank's car was parked, she began to shake off her vague apprehensions with more practical thoughts of the coming week end and its results. This had been a tiring day, she reflected, but, on the whole, satisfactory.

## Chapter 2

"WILL Junior recover from the operation? Will Helen forgive John? What will Aunt Martha do now? Don't miss tomorrow's moving episode of *Widow Blake's Family*, a simple story of everyday folks, brought to you at this time each Monday through Friday by the makers of —"

The announcer's mellow voice stopped abruptly as Irma switched off the portable radio. Again the ordinary sounds of Sunrise Point reached the awninged terrace of the Murray house — the hum of a motorboat cutting across the dazzling waters of the lake, the clink of horseshoes pitched by Bob and Frank down on the beach, the distant rattle of firecrackers, the laughter of the youngsters playing badminton on the side lawn.

"I know they're trashy," Irma apologized for her taste in radio programs, languidly fanning herself with a *Messenger of the Sacred Heart*. "But when you once get interested, it's hard to stop following them."

"No doubt." Caroline did not look up from the menu she was planning for next week's luncheon of the Catholic Charities Board. Irma would never be anything but an average housewife, she reflected; between her banalities and Janet's constant association with Peter, she almost wondered if Frank's influence on Bob was worth all she had endured these past few days. Tonight, thank God, the Hartmans would be here, and Bob would have to reach some definite decision.



"My, that Jordan girl plays good, doesn't she?" said Irma, watching the badminton game.

Caroline looked up with interest. "Doesn't she, though? But then Mimi seems to do everything well."

"Except for being so light, she sort of puts me in mind of her father," Irma observed. "Like he used to look when you went with him. You went quite steady there for a while, didn't you?"

"That was before I knew Bob," said Caroline evasively, and changed the subject. "You can see now, Irma, how wise it was to have Janet take Frank's name when you married him. Think how awkward it would be if Mimi knew who Janet's father really was."

"Oh, I don't know," said Irma. "I don't see that she'd have any kick coming. After all, it was Mimi's father that killed Janet's, not the other way around."

That was not a nice way to put it, Caroline felt, but she made no reply. The four young people had finished their game now, and walked over toward the terrace—the two girls in bright play suits, the boys in khaki shorts.

"Is it an hour since we ate, Mother?" asked Paul.

"Just about," said Caroline, consulting her watch. "Are you going for a swim now?"

"Yes, Mrs. Murray. We're going in from my part of the beach today, and then for a spin in the boat." Mimi Jordan's diction was unusually clear, though in no way affected. The little blue bow in her ash-blond curls made her look absurdly young, for she was rather petite, with a round, baby face and an innocent stare that in anyone else Caroline might have called vapid.

"I'll run along and change now, and you kids can meet me in front of our place," she continued.

"Okay," said Paul. "I'll bet we beat you there."

"Don't be too sure," laughed Mimi, and with a friendly smile at the two women ran down the stone stairs to the beach, as Janet and the boys went into the house.

"What a sweet girl Mimi is!" said Caroline with approval. Although she was slated to enter Vassar next year when she finished Lakeport Seminary, she gave the impression of having been raised quite simply — with the simplicity of those whose position is so certain that they have no need to impress anyone, thought Caroline. Had she been willing to analyze Mimi with her usual critical perception, she would have seen that the girl's upbringing had merely provided her with a set of graceful responses to any social situation, so that she could be thoroughly charming on all occasions without the least necessity of thought or initiative, and therefore she had developed neither faculty. Hers was a mind which only mature experience would awaken. But to Caroline even Pat Hartman now seemed only a conscious imitation of the delightful sub-deb type into which her cousin had grown so naturally.

She could still scarcely believe her sons' good fortune in making Mimi's acquaintance so soon. The life guard who knew everyone along the beach had provided the semblance of an introduction necessary for a girl like Mimi even amid summer informality; and, of course, attractive boys were welcomed more easily into any set than new girls. Mimi's friends were already a little weary of the same restricted circle of familiar faces. So Caroline was well satisfied that the exorbitant rent of the Sunrise Point house was not being spent in vain.

Best of all, though it was too early yet to be sure,

Caroline had the pleasant impression that Peter liked Mimi better than he ever had any girl other than Janet. How perfect, she thought, for Peter to go with Mimi and Paul with Pat! Not just because the one was Bert Jordan's daughter and the other his niece, but because both were exactly the kind of girls with whom she liked her boys to be seen. Nothing common about either of *them*! And who knew where the connection with Mimi might lead? As yet Caroline had had no opportunity to meet the girl's mother, but she was sure that with their children getting on so well they would become good friends before the summer was over.

But now Caroline wanted to talk to the boys alone, to make quite sure that Peter would be with Mimi tonight, lest she should be left the odd girl when Pat came out. She went over to the side lawn, where Irma would not hear, ostensibly to put the badminton equipment in its box as she waited for her sons to appear.

"Boys, where is the other badminton birdie?" she called the moment they stepped out the door, clad now in flowered trunks, which Paul had selected but which Peter said made him feel like something out of a Dorothy Lamour picture.

"Oh, here it is," she said, picking up the little feathered ball, when both boys had come over to join in the search. Then she lowered her voice. "You know, boys, I'm afraid Janet hasn't been having a very good time with only you two for beaux. Why don't you see that she meets some other nice boys?"

"She hasn't complained so far," smiled Peter.

"Of course not," said Caroline. "I was just afraid it might be awkward tonight, when you two are with Pat and Mimi."

"Pat!" Paul looked aghast. "My gosh, Mother, do you mean to say Pat's coming out with Mr. and Mrs. Hartman tonight?"

"You know perfectly well she is, Paul," said Caroline coldly.

"No, honest, Mother! It completely slipped my mind. Gee, I've got a date with Mimi! The four of us here have been planning to have a roast on the beach tonight."

"Oh, Paul, how could you do such a thing!" Caroline was exasperated; yet she might have known that Paul would be the one to appreciate Mimi. "Well, then, there's nothing to do but pair you off with Pat for tonight, Peter."

"Wait a minute now, Mother," Peter protested. "Pat's always been Paul's girl, not mine."

"Well, you look so much alike, I'm sure she won't mind this once."

"But I will!" Peter's face had set in that stubborn look that so annoyed his mother. "After all, I've been planning for tonight with Janet."

"Peter, you might be obliging for once in your life!" Caroline argued. "Janet's one of the family. She'll understand. Besides, Pat Hartman is a lovely girl."

"'Lovely to look at,' maybe, but not 'delightful to know,'" said Peter. "Just 'cause her father's mayor, she acts twice as snooty as Mimi without half as much reason."

"That's not true," said Caroline automatically, because she did not want it to be true. "Can't you get someone else for Janet?"

"Why not get someone else for Pat?" Peter suggested. "Or let her go without a date. It'll do her good."

"If you'd only let us know before, Mother," Paul put in.

"I've had more important things on my mind! But I distinctly remember mentioning it to you on Sunday. Naturally, I didn't want to say too much in front of Janet because I thought she'd be the extra girl. Oh, here she comes now. Run along, don't keep Mimi waiting. I'll think of some way out."

As the youngsters went down the stairs, Caroline returned to sit with Irma, but her mind was less than ever on the menu before her. She was extremely displeased with both her sons, with Paul for creating an awkward situation, with Peter for refusing to solve it her way. Yet Paul's fault, after all, was quite understandable. Like her, he saw that if Pat was good, Mimi was better.

There was in the little affair, Caroline realized, a certain teen-age parallel to the old triangle among herself, Bert, and Miriam. The best Catholic background money could buy was still not quite up to the taken-for-granted prestige of the older families. Even on such a minor scale, Caroline did not want Pat hurt as she had once been — certainly not while her father's good will was so important to Bob's nomination.

Since Janet could not be disposed of bodily, however, another boy to even the party seemed the only solution. But who, at this late date? As yet the twins hardly knew any of the boys around here well enough to ask such a favor, and most of their friends in the city surely had plans made by now. Most, but not all. What about Joe Militello? Caroline asked herself, trying to think of those least likely to be doing anything important. Yes, Joe would be quite good enough for Janet; after all, she knew his sister. Perhaps, please God, he might even begin to win Janet away from Peter.

The problem now was to get in touch with him, for, in accordance with Sunrise Point's elaborately maintained seclusion, only a few of the larger houses, like Jordans', had telephones. And the only public phone, at the community store half a mile down the road, was very public indeed — not even enclosed in a booth. Then, with the feeling of inevitable rightness that always accompanied her most brilliant ideas, Caroline saw her opportunity to kill two birds with one efficient stone. Why had she not thought of it before?

"I'm going to make a phone call," she told Irma. "The children need an extra boy for tonight."

"Want me to drive you over to the store?" Irma offered. "Our car is behind yours in the yard —"

"That won't be necessary, thanks. I'm going to ask Mrs. Jordan if I may use her phone."

"Oh, Carriel" said Irma. "Don't you want me to come with you, anyway? I'm dying to see the inside of that house. And after all, she's my sister-in-law's sister-in-law, just like Loretta is to you."

"It takes only one to make a phone call." Caroline's words cut across Irma's. "I don't know what she'd think if you just sat there rubbering while I phoned."

"Oh, all right, then." Irma returned to her magazine.

Having changed to her most becoming blue and white printed silk and added a blue clip to her snow-white bob, Caroline felt a pleasant sense of adventure as she walked along the Point's private road, behind the few houses that separated hers from Jordans'. The latter was bigger than most people's city homes, she thought, though to Miriam Keith Jordan it probably seemed a mere cozy nook, after the grandeur of Keithaven, the baronial family

estate, which in keeping with her reduced income she had subdivided and rented since Bert's death. It would be just her luck to find Miriam out, Caroline told herself, and have to ask the favor of servants. But no! The uniformed maid who opened the side door asked her to step into the living room while she announced her to Mrs. Jordan.

In her momentary wait Caroline's eye missed no detail of the room's studied simplicity. Every antique was an original, she knew, for Miriam's collection of Early American pieces, both inherited and acquired, had often been written up in the papers. Through the French doors to the terrace Caroline glimpsed Miriam herself, sipping some tall iced drink at an umbrella-shaded table with another woman — a tall, thin woman who looked like an angular sketch from next month's *Harper's Bazaar*. From her mental gallery of Lakeport's social register Caroline was thrilled to identify the guest as Mrs. Averill Phelps — *the* Mrs. Averill Phelps, as she put it to herself — the former Charlotte Winthrop, a noted horsewoman and one of the most prominent members of Miriam's set. Would she be introduced? Caroline wondered, as Miriam arose at the maid's message and came across the terrace into the living room.

Small boned and ash blond like her daughter, Miriam Jordan was by no means beautiful, but she had a look of breeding that took generations to produce, Caroline thought — something that made her plain, black linen sport dress look smarter than anything Caroline had ever worn. It seemed strange that this distinguished woman, whom she had recognized so many times on the street, at the theater, in the more exclusive downtown shops, should

be looking at her for the first time now, with the politely questioning gaze of a total stranger.

"I do hope you'll forgive my bursting in on you like this, Mrs. Jordan," she began. "I'm Caroline Murray, one of your new neighbors."

"How do you do, Mrs. Murray?" Miriam smiled graciously. "I believe my daughter has met your sons."

"And quite captivated both of them!" beamed Caroline, encouraged. "But I really came to ask a favor of you, Mrs. Jordan."

"Won't you sit down while you tell me about it?" Miriam gestured toward a Windsor chair.

"Thank you, but it won't take a moment." Caroline had seldom come so close to feeling nervous. "You see, I have a rather personal phone call to make, and that phone at the store is so public — especially on a holiday like this, I wondered if I might use yours?"

"Why, certainly, Mrs. Murray. You'll find it right there in the hall."

"Oh, thank you!"

Miriam returned to the terrace, while Caroline found the Militellos' number in the Lakeport directory. Of all people to be calling on *this* phone, she thought. The voice that answered sounded like Rita's, but Caroline did not investigate. After a number of audible shrieks for Joe, the boy himself came on.

"Hello, Joe," said Caroline. "This is Mrs. Murray, the twins' mother."

She let that sink in; poor Joe's gulp was almost audible.

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Murray," he said then. "Well, how are Pete and Paul?"

"Just fine, Joe. They've been intending and intending to



call you ever since we moved out to Sunrise Point Saturday, but we have no phone of our own out here, you know, so I thought I'd better call for them now while I have the chance."

"Sure," said Joe. "I know how it is."

"Well, you see, Joe," she went on, "they're planning a little roast for tonight — nothing fancy, only the three couples, in fact. And, of course, they want *you* for the third boy."

"They do?" He didn't have to sound *that* surprised, thought Caroline. "Well, gee, Mrs. Murray, I don't have to work tonight and I'd certainly love to come out, but the thing is, I couldn't get our car. My father's taking the kids over to the Park for the fireworks."

She might have known there would be something like that! But she was not so easily defeated.

"Oh, don't let that stop you, Joe. There are some other friends of ours driving out this evening who'll be glad to pick you up if you get in touch with them."

"Well, I could do that all right, Mrs. Murray," said the boy hopefully. "Who are the people?"

"Mayor Hartman and his family. You must know his daughter Pat, don't you?"

"Not very well. I only met her a few times with Paul." Joe's naïve embarrassment was obvious. "Maybe you better ask someone else, Mrs. Murray, someone with a car. It'll be less bother —"

As though she would be asking him, if anyone else were available!

"I won't hear of it, Joe," she insisted. "The twins would never forgive me. Just call up and explain things to Pat as I have to you. Tell her you're to be Janet's date."

"Janet? But I thought —"

"Yes, Janet Straubmeyer, the twins' cousin." Caroline cut him short. "She goes to school with your sister Rita. So you go call Pat now, Joe, and we'll be looking for you early this evening. I'm sure you'll all have a grand time."

"Okay, Mrs. Murray. Thanks an awful lot for asking me. It was swell of the twins to think of me."

"Oh, don't mention it, Joe."

When she had replaced the phone, she went back into the living room to thank Miriam again, hoping to be summoned to the terrace for an introduction to Mrs. Phelps. But Miriam merely came part way across, to ask, "Did you get your party all right?"

"Yes. Thank you ever so much, Mrs. Jordan. You've been most kind."

"Not at all, Mrs. Murray. You're entirely welcome to use the telephone whenever you have occasion." Miriam's tone seemed to indicate that the conversation was over, and though Caroline would have loved to stay longer, she felt it best not to overdo things the first time.

"Well, then, thank you again." Caroline moved toward the door. "It's been a pleasure, Mrs. Jordan. I did so want to meet Mimi's mother."

With a final cordial smile they parted. That last remark had been particularly good, with its assumed innocence of the Jordan social position, thought Caroline, as she paused to admire the elaborate flower beds in the garden. Just as if she had not followed Miriam's career in the society pages almost since childhood!

Daughter of Lakeport's fabulous railroad heiress, Fanny Sutton (the sensation of a London season in the Eighties) and Tyler Keith, the banker for whom she reputedly refused

a duke, Miriam Keith had always been to Lakeport all that Alice Roosevelt was to the nation. Even now, as Caroline walked slowly back toward her own house, she could recall pictures of Miriam's debut in the winter of 1914, in a peg-topped Poiret gown straight from Paris, with genuine aigrettes curving from her blond pompadour; Miriam — the first girl in Lakeport to wear riding breeches — taking hurdles at the horse show; Miriam on the Vassar Daisy Chain; Miriam in jaunty war uniforms, doing canteen work with the Junior League; and finally, Miriam's wedding, solemnized in St. Giles' Cathedral by the Episcopal bishop himself, and attended by many of New York's elite as well as all of Lakeport's.

Then in the lavish 1920's, even after Mimi's birth, came other pictures — in *Vanity Fair* now or in syndicated rotogravure — of Mrs. Albert Neill Jordan, the well-known "international hostess," gowned for her presentation at St. James; in her box at Ascot or Longchamps; at St. Moritz, in Monte Carlo, on the Lido, enjoying the season with titled friends. But never with Bert.

The fact that almost from the first all Lakeport knew that its spoiled darling was an unloved wife had done much to soften Caroline's natural jealousy and revive her earlier heroine worship. Yes, though she had married Bert, she had lost him far more bitterly than Caroline ever had, for Caroline at least would always carry the deep-hidden conviction that had he married for love, *she* would have been his choice.

Ironically, despite all reports of lordly, even princely, attentions to Miriam, Bert had refused either to divorce her or to let her divorce him. He had sacrificed far too much in marrying her ever to renounce what material ad-

vantages the match had brought him. So the long deadlock continued until the market collapse precipitated its violent end, and now when Caroline thought of that ill-starred union that had so tragically failed to satisfy the hopes of either partner, she could pity Miriam almost as much as Bert. And at last she had talked as an equal to this glamorous woman of the world! She could hardly have felt more honored by a personal audience with the Pope.

"Oh, Carriel!" cried Irma, when Caroline had rejoined her. "You must tell me all about Jordans' house."

"Sorry, Irma, but I was really much more interested in Mrs. Jordan herself. She's as smart looking as the Duchess of Windsor! They're friends, you know; that's why she didn't happen to know the present King and Queen."

"What's she like to talk to?" asked Irma without much interest.

"A delightful woman! Just like Mimi." Caroline had decided not to mention the presence of Charlotte Phelps. "I don't know how Loretta can say she's so uppish. If you ask me, there must be two sides to that story."

"Oh, there was never any love lost between them, if that's what you mean, even when Bert was alive."

"Poor Mrs. Jordan was traveling most of the time then. It was dreadful, wasn't it," said Caroline, relishing her pity, "the way they said Bert treated her."

"I think they both got just what was coming to them." The remark was unusually harsh, for Irma. "If she hadn't made him give up his faith, I bet they'd have had a lot more respect for each other."

"Oh, well, who are we to judge?" said Caroline with that kindly tolerance that was so much a part of her.

Already she was visioning all that her proposed friendship with Miriam might mean if Bob was elected mayor. Never would she make Loretta's mistake of not keeping up such a valuable connection.

"Did you have a good game, boys?" asked Irma presently, as Bob and Frank came slowly up the stairs from the beach.

"A good hot game!" Frank tossed the horseshoes on the grass and sat down in the glider beside his wife. His face was beefy with sunburn.

"Bob, dear, you mustn't overdo," Caroline warned. He should be saving himself for the campaign.

"Don't worry," he said. "A little mild exercise won't hurt the old ticker."

"You're the doctor," she smiled.

"Is there some beer on ice, Carrie?" Frank asked.

"There certainly is. I'll have Olga bring some out." Caroline rose at once to go into the house; her sisterly devotion these days knew no bounds.

"Don't bother Olga. I'll bring it out," said Bob, following Caroline into the living room. Its grass rugs and chintz-covered wicker looked commonplace to Caroline now, after Jordans'.

"She's only peeling potatoes on the back porch," she protested as they walked through to the gleaming white kitchen. "After all, dear, what do we keep a maid for?"

"I know," said Bob, "but I've hardly had a minute to talk to you alone these past few days."

That had been quite all right with Caroline; she preferred to let Frank talk up the mayoral idea, rather than pin herself down to a position that might not fit into her conscientiously played role of model wife.

"Why, is there something Frank and Irma shouldn't hear?" she asked innocently, her back to Bob as she took down four glasses from the cupboard.

"You know it's not that, Caroline." Bob set four frosty bottles of Straubmeyer's "Lorelei" on the table. "I just want to know what you really think of this mayor business — aside from all Frank's arguments, I mean."

"Well, I don't see how you *can* set aside all Frank's arguments just like that," Caroline ventured.

"But do you really want me to run? That's what matters."

"It's not what any of us wants that matters." Caroline gently shook her head. "As I see it, it's a question of what you *ought* to do."

"And you think I ought to run?"

"Since you ask, dear, I must say frankly I don't see how you can refuse. Of course, if you do for some good reason of your own, the boys and I will try never to let it make a bit of difference. We'll always know you *could* have been a leader, anyway."

"Is that how the boys feel about it?"

"How do you suppose they feel at their age?" Caroline smiled. "They don't want to influence you any more than I do, but no matter what Peter may say, you know they'd love to have their own dad mayor of Lakeport."

"Then I guess from any angle it would be pretty selfish of me not to accept if the party wants me," said Bob gravely.

"Don't say that, Bob, It's not in you to be selfish. You're just a little unwilling to believe in yourself — like Lincoln." Then Caroline varied her approach slightly. "But after all, the position isn't all responsibility! It certainly won't be

any harder than being Health Commissioner. In a way, it'll be a reward for all your work these past four years."

"All I would have asked was to get back to my own practice," sighed Bob. "But if I must, I suppose I must."

"Just think of the honor!" Caroline persisted. "Mayor of a city of six hundred thousand people! The second largest in the state, 'Key City of the Great Lakes.'"

"Of course, Frank may be overestimating my chances," said Bob, almost hopefully, putting the bottles and glasses on a tray. "We'll have to hear what news George brings tonight."

"But if George says the word —" Caroline carefully kept the anxiety out of her voice — "you will run?"

"Yes," said Bob. "I'll run."

"I knew you'd decide what was best," said Caroline as casually as she could, "if we just let you make up your own mind."

Good old Bob, she thought, looking at his worn, kindly face. He had never been a dream man, but in the long run he was proving just the kind of husband she had expected. Hers had been no spite marriage, hastily contracted on the rebound, but one planned, and successfully planned, to last. Where would she be now if she had married that enigmatic Russell or even Bert, for all his charm? If Bob never quite understood her as either of the others had . . . well, few people did. That was the price a sensitive person always paid, she supposed.

At heart Bob was still much the same simple, small-town boy as when they had first met, she knew; but for her he might even have been a small-town doctor, perish the thought! Thus he could never quite take for granted the poised, sophisticated, dazzlingly clever city girl who

had condescended to be his. He had a mind of his own, of course, which Caroline encouraged him to use in matters of no concern to her, knowing that on any important issue he could always be charmed into her way of thinking. That, after all, was what counted most, she realized. One could not have everything.

Frank was jubilant at Bob's decision and sure that George would bring unanimous endorsement from the other members of the county executive council, whose final word was to be given to him today.

"It's going to be hard on you, Carrie," Irma sympathized.

"I know." Caroline took a dainty sip of beer with the air of one bravely downing her hemlock. "But if Bob's willing to sacrifice his next four years to the city, surely the least I can do is try to help. Isn't that what a wife is for?"

"You all seem awfully sure I'd be elected," Bob remarked.

"How can we lose?" Frank swung his glass of beer in an expansive gesture. "After a clean administration like George's, it's a cinch the organization candidate will win the primaries. And as far as the campaign goes, the Republicans haven't got a leg to stand on. It's a good thing there's nothing in your record they can use for mud slinging."

"Oh, they wouldn't stoop to that!" Caroline exclaimed.

"The hell they wouldn't!" laughed Frank. "Anything goes in Lakeport politics. Remember how we elected Hogan back in '27 on the simple fact that the other fellow's daughter had been caught in a speakeasy raid two years before? We never even had to mention it on the platform, but it certainly swung the dry vote."



"To Hogan, of all people!" said Bob. "I'm afraid I'll have to leave the finer points of politics to you, Frank."

Caroline hoped Bob was not going to turn squeamish. After all, practical politics had nothing to do with a man's private character. Was not Frank a former Grand Knight of the Lakeport K. of C. Council? And George was the pride of the St. Charles' Holy Name Society. Even Mayor Hogan had been technically known as a "prominent Catholic layman."

It was not long afterward that Janet appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Whew!" she sighed, throwing herself on the grass. "We've been gathering wood for tonight till I feel like a Campfire Girl."

The boys, who had come trudging up after her, sat down on either side of her.

"Mimi says on the night of the Fourth everyone along the beach tries to see who'll have the biggest bonfire," Paul explained.

"Oh, say, Mother," said Peter, "wasn't that you coming out of Jordans' side door while we were in swimming? Did you go to call on Mimi's mother?"

"Before she's called on me? Hardly! I just wanted to use their telephone." She could feel the suspicion in Peter's gaze, but she continued smoothly. "I knew you needed another boy for tonight, so I got Joe Militello for you. He's coming out with the Hartmans."

She was glad it was someone to whom Peter could not possibly object.

"That'll be nice for Pat," he said evenly.

"It'll be nice for all of you," Caroline corrected, understanding perfectly what he had meant. "After all, at your

age you don't have to be paired off like a Noah's Ark."

"But it's more fun that way," Paul grinned.

Guessing what Peter was thinking, Caroline was almost sorry that she had invited Joe. If Pat had come alone, perhaps mere politeness would have forced Peter to pay her more attention than Janet. Now he would do no such thing. Was ever a devoted mother afflicted with such a difficult son? If only she could send Peter away to college and keep Paul at home! But, of course, they would never stand for such a separation, and besides it would seem to favor Peter.

"You kids better get dressed," said Irma. "Olga'll be making supper pretty soon."

Making supper! thought Caroline, as Janet and the boys went into the house. Really, Irma was almost as bad as Mama with those quaint expressions that the Irish incorrectly called "Dutch."

Because of the weather, the meal was a simple assortment of cold cuts, deviled eggs, and potato salad. Seven bottles of Straubmeyer's "Lorelei" also stood on the table, despite Caroline's disapproval. Not that she resented private reminders of the source of the family income as once she had; even a brewery fortune took on a certain dignity after fifty years. What she minded was Irma's lax way of letting Janet drink beer. It was different with the twins. They were boys. But Irma had a way of letting good advice go in one ear and out the other.

Caroline's attention was again drawn to Janet's faulty upbringing by a discussion among the three young people of some new novel called *The Grapes of Wrath*. A certain amount of culture was all very well, it seemed to her, but it was fatal for a girl to be too bookish when there were

so many more important things on which to use her mind. That had been Rosemary Quinn's trouble, Caroline always thought, though it was too much to hope that Janet also might one day take the veil. With only one child, Irma would undoubtedly talk her out of it. Caroline had no sympathy for such selfish mothers. If one of her sons should have a vocation, how proud she would be! Paul, of course, was too much like her to be happy in the religious life, but she would certainly never stand in Peter's way.

"I'd like to get hold of a copy, anyway," Peter was saying. "Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* was darn good."

"But Mother Celestine says this *Grapes of Wrath* ought to be on the Index," Janet argued.

"I'll bet she hasn't even read it!" laughed Peter.

"Well, I heard it's just a lot of Communist propaganda," Paul announced, as if to settle the subject.

Paul was probably right, Caroline suspected, but she was not one to venture an opinion where uncertainty was likely to be shown up at once.

"Why don't you ask Father Nolan up at Springbury about it some Sunday?" Irma suggested.

"I'm afraid he wouldn't know," said Peter. "Springbury is probably still reading *Gone With The Wind*."

"It might be a good idea, though, as long as we have to drive ten miles to church, anyway," said Paul, adding with a grimace, "Boy, we'll have to get up in the middle of the night to make First Friday this week."

"What gets me," said Frank, warming to a favorite complaint of all, "is not having any noon Mass there on Sundays."

"Yes, we certainly deserve martyrs' crowns for that," said Bob with a twinkle. "But then we're probably the first

city Catholics Springbury's ever had. If more came out this way for the summer, there'd be a church closer at hand."

Caroline felt an implied reproach in that remark, but after all, in choosing a summer home one could not anticipate every last detail.

"It's certainly not much like St. Charles'," she observed, thinking of the fashion show that noon Mass there meant. "I noticed Sunday there seemed to be nothing but fishermen and Italians from that canning factory."

"Some fishermen have done pretty well in the Church," murmured Bob. "Some Italians, too."

"Why do you suppose poor Father Nolan was ever sent away out in the sticks like that?" Irma wondered. "He was so popular when he was assistant at Immaculate Conception."

"Oh, don't you remember?" Caroline loved to air her knowledge of diocesan affairs, which was more lively, if less accurate, than the chancellor's. "I thought everyone knew. The bishop didn't like the way he came out for Father Coughlin."

"Good for the bishop," said Bob. "At least he keeps the Church out of politics — if not politics out of the Church."

"Just the same," Frank remarked, "I'll bet he'd rather see another Catholic mayor of Lakeport."

Perhaps His Excellency might even be maneuvered into some token of approval for Bob's candidacy, thought Caroline. Not for nothing was she planning next week's luncheon so carefully. But at least Monsignor Straubmeyer should certainly be willing to do that much for his own flesh and blood.

"I was just thinking how nice it would be," she said,

"just to show how proud real Catholics are of their faith — if Uncle Francis could bless the opening of Bob's campaign."

"Say, do you think he would?" asked Frank eagerly.

"I don't see why not," Caroline said. "He's always blessed every other kind of undertaking in the family."

"What a break for us if we could get publicity on it!" Frank exclaimed. "Just one good picture of Monsignor with Bob would cinch every last Catholic vote in Lakeport. Remember how proud everyone was of him the time he squelched Bert Jordan's widow on that Birth Control Forum?"

"You make it all sound so commercial," sighed Caroline in gentle reproof. "But I suppose you do know best about such things."

So far so good, she reflected. Even Monsignor's unfortunate clash with Miriam could do no harm as long as the latter was unaware of the family connection. But not until she had heard what George Hartman had to say would Caroline rest easily. She had not long to wait, for it was less than an hour after dinner that the Hartmans and Joe Militello arrived.

"I guess we just hit the right time for traffic. Everyone else had stopped to eat," George boomed amid the first greetings in the back yard, which adjoined the road. He was a good-looking, gray-haired man whose effective platform manner, developed in his years as a lawyer, often carried over into conversation.

Poor Joe's best navy serge was hopelessly out of place beside the twins' cool, blue linen slack suits, Caroline noted behind her most hospitable smile, but Pat, as usual, looked much smarter than Janet.

"What a smooth dress, Pat," Janet was saying. "From New York?"

"Oh, but def," drawled Pat, removing her exotically dark sunglasses. "Lord knows I don't get down often enough, but I do like to buy a few of my things there. Dirndl, you know." She turned about to show the effect of the full, peasant skirt. "It's no Hattie Carnegie number, but at least they won't be showing it in Lakeport for months."

"How was the Fair?" asked Peter politely as they entered the house.

"Oh, all right — mostly tourist stuff." Pat was nothing if not blasé. "I'd rather have taken in more of the shows. That *Philadelphia Story* was slick. And we did see Brenda Frazier in the Stork Club."

"Well, well, crashing café society?" laughed Janet.

Loretta had brought Irma a dozen souvenir drinking glasses from the Fair, and for Caroline two pairs of salt and pepper shakers in the ubiquitous forms of the trylon and perisphere. After thanking her profusely (just as if she would be found dead using such things!), Caroline proceeded to show Loretta through the house, with Irma's unwanted help.

"Say, this is grand!" Loretta exclaimed again and again, and finally remarked, "I'll bet it sets you back plenty."

"Oh, we manage," said Caroline. Loretta was really quite common at times, she had begun to notice.

"I wish we could get away for the whole summer like this. But George won't even commute to Crystal Bay, and I'd hate to leave him alone in the city. Anyway, Pat gets invited to enough other girls' places to last her."

"Bob doesn't mind staying in the city," Caroline said.

"He'll eat at my mother's, and, of course, he'll be out every week end and any other time he can get away. I think you spoil George."

With that they rejoined the others on the terrace, where Olga now served cuba libres, ordered by Caroline as more suitable to the occasion than the usual beer. The five young people were given soft drinks.

"Say, it'll be dark before we know it," said Paul presently, "and I want to get a few shots of us around the fire. You know, '*Life Goes to a Wiener Roast.*' We'd better go down and get Mimi."

How like Paul to plunge right in, thought Caroline, waiting for Pat to ask who Mimi was. But she let Joe voice the question.

"Mimi Jordan, Pat's cousin," was Paul's only explanation; though Peter added, "Just to keep the number even, you know."

When they had gone, Loretta spoke up at once.

"Then I take it you've met our friend Miriam?"

"Oh, yes." Caroline was glad that she could say so truthfully now. "And I must say, Loretta, she was very sweet to me."

"So was the Queen of England when I met her," laughed Loretta, "and it'll mean just about as much."

"We'll see." Just because Loretta was unacceptable to her patrician sister-in-law did not mean that *she* would be so, Caroline told herself.

When the three men had finished their drinks, Frank suggested, to Caroline's intense annoyance, that they take a walk along the beach — obviously so that they could talk politics among themselves. With more patience than she felt, she sat listening as Loretta chatted on about the

General Motors Futorama and Billy Rose's Aquacade. Fortunately, Irma made most of the right comments.

Every time Peter or Paul came up the stairs to get some forgotten necessity for the roast, Caroline started in anticipation and then relaxed in disappointment. She could no longer even care much about who was paired off with whom down below. What if the other Democratic leaders had refused to support Bob? What if he should back out, after all? What if George had found someone else? When at last the three figures appeared at the head of the stairs, Caroline's look of relief was concealed only by the gathering darkness.

"Well, ladies," George announced in his most eloquent tones, "may I present the next mayor of Lakeport — Dr. Robert E. Murray!"

"Oh, Bob!" There were actually tears in Caroline's eyes as she went to kiss her husband. "I'm so proud of you!"

"We're all going to be mighty proud of him, Caroline," George went on. "There's no better man for the highest office within the gift of the voters of Lakeport."

"Though I never did see a man less anxious for it," said Frank with a rueful little laugh. Perhaps poor Frank himself had once had mayoral ambitions, thought Caroline for the first time. Too bad.

"But you must understand," Bob was saying, "until election, my first duty to Lakeport will still be as Health Commissioner."

"Of course, Bob," said George easily. "I knew when I appointed you that's the kind of Commissioner you'd make. The people won't forget, either, who checked that infantile epidemic two years ago, who enforced every sanitation law in the books, who —"



"Listen to His Honor!" laughed Loretta. "Save that for the campaign, hon. You don't have to sell Bob to us."

"We'll hardly have to sell him to the public, with a record like his," Frank observed.

"Just you leave everything in our hands, Bob," George advised. "Managing a campaign is old stuff to us."

"Let's see, what'd make a good slogan?" Frank speculated. "A vote for Murray is —"

"A vote for Murray," Bob suggested dryly.

"Honor or no honor," Irma was saying, "I certainly don't envy you, Carrie."

"We all have to take what comes our way," said Caroline, feeling well disposed now even toward poor Irma, who was not clever enough, anyhow, to make a remark based on sour grapes.

Completely satisfied for the present, Caroline could now see new beauty in everything — the dim, twinkling lights of fishing boats on the horizon, scarcely distinguishable now from the stars above them — both paled by the string of fires that flamed from end to end of the beach. From the roast below came the youngsters' voices, singing softly, to the music of the portable radio, *The Lamp Is Low*. A Roman candle shot from somewhere burst into blazing ribbons of color against the evening sky — a final magic touch to a perfect moment.

"Isn't that song lovely?" Caroline murmured dreamily, recognizing it as one of the adapted classics so popular this summer. "I do love Tchaikovsky!"

"But it's by Ravel, Mother." Peter's voice at her elbow shattered Caroline's mood; she had not seem him coming up the stairs in the darkness. "We're going over to the store to get more marshmallows."

"We'll have to use our car, Dad, Have you got the keys?" came Janet's voice, as she stepped into view.

"Here they are." Frank tossed them to Peter.

Eager to share her triumph with anyone new, Caroline said, "You might tell Paul when you come back, Peter, your father has just agreed to run for mayor."

"He has? That's great." Peter sounded more polite than enthusiastic. "I never knew you wanted to be mayor, Dad."

"That's not always what matters most, son," said Bob. "But you and Paul would like it, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, sure," said Peter. "Paul will love it."

That dispelled the last of Caroline's momentary mellowness. Really, Peter could spoil anything with his queer attitudes! Always quick to take attained objectives for granted, Caroline could not stand the tiniest fly in an ointment so carefully prepared. A fine son for Lakeport's mayor Peter would make! She could see herself continually explaining "Peter, my other son. Yes, he's with Janet Straubmeyer. No, she's not exactly his cousin. . . ." Then the whole sordid tale of Irma's first marriage would come out, linking the mayor's family forever to a cheap bootlegger's murder. No, that was not to be borne! Peter and Janet must be broken up once and for all.

Not that Pat Hartman's plight of the evening mattered so much any more; it was the principle of Peter's disobedience that rankled. Deliberately defying his mother's express wishes! What could one do with such a boy, to whom none of the niceties seemed to matter? He read so much, perhaps he was cut out for the priesthood . . . If only he *would* develop a vocation, what a perfect solution to everything! And what a fitting crown to all her sacri-

fices for the Church! With a son studying for Holy Orders, surely Bob would go down as the most Catholic of all Catholic mayors in Lakeport's history. And after all, Peter's quiet ways had led more than one person to remark what a fine priest he would make.

But there was all summer to think about that. He might still catch on with one of Mimi's friends if he were given enough opportunity. The first step now was to see that both Irma and Janet left for the city tonight when Frank did. They had been invited for the week end, and Caroline did not mean to have them stay one moment longer. Among other reasons, she had no intention of letting the name of Straubmeyer be brought too often to Miriam Jordan's notice.

Peter's brief comment had caught Janet's attention as well as his mother's.

"Why did you say that, Peter?" she asked, getting into her stepfather's car. "Wouldn't you like your father to be mayor?"

"Well, yeah, sure, I suppose so." Peter was trying hard to analyze his confused feelings, which he had difficulty in expressing even to Janet. "It'd be nice and all that, only I just know Dad would rather be a doctor, that's all. Maybe on account of wanting to be one myself, I can sort of understand how he feels."

"And Paul wouldn't, would he?" Janet observed.

"Oh, well, you know how Paul is." Peter kept his eyes on the stretch of road picked out of the unrelieved darkness by the headlights. He found the subject of his twin even harder to discuss than himself. "He kind of rushes right ahead without thinking sometimes, but you know it's just that he doesn't think."

"Sure," said Janet, "but there are times when he ought to think! Like tonight. Pat always gives me a pain with those Sem girl airs, but I couldn't help feeling sorry when she caught on that Joe was her date. That was pretty hard to take."

"Well, that's really as much my fault as Paul's," said Peter. "My mother wanted —"

"Oh, Peter, sometimes I could just shake you!" Janet broke in. "It was not your fault! Why should you pull Paul's irons out of the fire? He wouldn't have got in such a fix if he wasn't trying to be such a wolf."

"Now, Jan, that's not quite fair," Peter protested. "He can't help it if he's so popular. He always has been. You know that. I don't mind."

"But why should he be? What's he got that you haven't got?"

"Oh, I don't know — a smooth line, maybe. He keeps it in practice, too. I just don't bother trying to make every new girl I meet. You know me, the serious type. But look at what I've got that he hasn't got!" He slipped his arm around her shoulders.

"That's just why I don't like to see you getting overlooked for Paul all the time. After all, he's only a few minutes older than you."

"It doesn't bother me, Jan, honest. Paul and I are too close ever to be jealous or anything like that. We just want different things, that's all."

"I know, Peter. Probably I shouldn't even have brought it up. But sometimes it makes me sick the way even your mother seems to consider him ahead of you."

"Maybe he needs it more. I think I can get along

better on my own, without having to impress everyone all the time. But I do all right. We get along, don't we?"

"So far." Janet put her head on his shoulder. "But I'll certainly be surprised if I see much of you this summer."

## Chapter 3

"I CAN'T get over what a fine place you've got here, Carrie," said Monsignor Straubmeyer again, looking about the living room. These September days were getting a bit too chilly for sitting on the shaded terrace. "I'm sorry I didn't get out before."

"Oh, I realized how busy you are most of the time, Uncle," Caroline assured him. "But I knew the girls of the Rosary and Altar Society would love having you address our little luncheon yesterday."

Coming from St. Charles' parish, they at least had appreciated the honor shown them. Caroline was still a little disappointed that the presence of the Right Reverend Francis X. Straubmeyer, now that she *was* entertaining him, had attracted so little notice in Springbury, where he had said the ten o'clock Mass this morning. Since in his unaccountable way he had forbidden the flustered Father Nolan to make any announcement of the fact, few except regular readers of the *Catholic Herald* recognized the plump, white-haired priest as their Vicar-General.

"If I'd known how big the place is," he was saying, "I'd have asked you to let the orphans from St. John's hold their picnic here, so the nuns wouldn't have to rent a grove."

"Too bad you didn't think of it in time," said Bob.

"Perhaps some other year," Caroline suggested vaguely,

wondering how she would ever have averted such a ghastly possibility. Imagine even hoping to foist a lot of other people's brats on her in a place like Sunrise Point! Monsignor did not know how lucky he was to be here himself — much less why he had been invited.

All conversation ceased now, Paul put down the Sunday comics and Peter closed his book, eagerly turning toward the radio as the strains of *Over The Rainbow* were interrupted by another dispatch from Paris. Really, Caroline reflected, the men were getting as bad as poor Irma with her daytime serials.

Since Friday, when the Germans had marched into Poland, the air had been tense with ominous news flashes and still more ominous commentaries; yet now the actual announcement that England and France had declared war struck a slight chill even to Caroline's heart. On second thought, however, she realized how glad the whole Democratic party would be now that they had chosen Bob instead of some German-named candidate. Yes, this would certainly eliminate Dieterle at the primaries.

Bob looked at Monsignor, who shook his head sadly, and Peter and Paul, a little pale beneath their deep tans, exchanged a grave glance. Why did Germany always have to be in the wrong? Caroline was wondering — and allied with Italy, of all uncongenial countries. Even though she knew that no foreign war could ever again entangle America as the last one had, she was glad that her boys at least were not saddled with a German name.

And the very thought of all those poor young Europeans being regimented for slaughter made her appreciate anew the relative charms of the most ascetic religious life for a boy — an idea that had been growing on her all summer.

Yes, when God was so much more just to her than to those mothers over there, was it not her plain duty to sacrifice a son to His service?

From the twins' childhood she had occasionally toyed with the thought that she had been doubly blessed for this very purpose — one son for her and one for God — but of late she had come to feel that now, if ever, was the time. Such a hostage, so to speak, would surely guarantee the continuance of divine blessings; and in such a vital issue as Bob's campaign it was not wise to overlook any source of help, natural or supernatural.

Indeed, she thought, as the men talked on about the war and the boys resumed their reading, she had done more for the campaign than Bob himself. Even the weeks when he had been too busy to leave the city at all, she suspected, were more occupied with checking the usual summer increase of infantile paralysis than with advancing his political career. It was all very well to leave details to Frank and George, but surely they had not meant to be taken so literally.

Not that they were not doing a good job. By the middle of July the first billboards had appeared all over Lakeport, urging in large red and blue letters on a white background the candidacy of Dr. Robert E. Murray, Commissioner of Health — "Upright — Fearless — Humane." Caroline still preferred the more imposing form "R. Emmett," but she recognized Frank's wisdom in playing up what he called the "just folks" angle. She even allowed herself to be seen and photographed with the Lakeport Democratic Women's League and other groups she normally despised. After all, any dignity sacrificed now could be more than retrieved after the election.



Indeed, Caroline had actually gone so far as to endure Dr. and Mrs. Militello for a whole Sunday, simply because of his influence among the Italian element. Only Joe had been invited with them, though Caroline expressed many regrets that they had not thought to bring the other children. The doctor, of course, expected to be made Health Commissioner when Bob became mayor.

With all fall to conciliate such people, however, Caroline did not let even the exigencies of the campaign seriously interfere with her major strategy of penetrating Sunrise Point. She was glad that Miriam Jordan naturally did not see the *Catholic Herald*, in which the photograph of Bob and Monsignor Straubmeyer had appeared shortly after Frank thought he had the idea. It would hardly further a budding friendship to have the Murrays so publicly linked to a man of whom Miriam could have only the most unpleasant memories. So Caroline's guest list for the most part had been extremely select.

Her parents, dutifully invited early in the season, had declined, with her father's complaint about the long ride and her mother's protest that she would feel out of place among families in whose households so many of her friends had worked — or still worked. Caroline did not press the point. And, of course, even Mama and Papa had to admit that it would be too much bother to drive all the way into the city every other Sunday just for the family dinners. As for Irma, with Frank so busy on the campaign, it was easy enough to encourage her wifely inclination to stay in Lakeport with him. Thus Caroline had not seen much of any of her relatives since June.

On the same principle she had used much discretion in playing hostess to her various Catholic organizations.

None but the smaller, more exclusive groups rated an invitation to Sunrise Point. The Catholic Charities Board had been followed, at well-spaced intervals, by the Lakeport Trinity Alumnae; the executive council of Court Gibbons, local chapter of the Catholic Daughters of America; and the officers of the International Federation of Catholic Alumnae's Lakeport Circle. Only yesterday, the second of September, did she relent enough to entertain the St. Charles Borromeo Rosary and Altar Society. They had made a fairly smart appearance, after all, and also provided a good excuse for inviting Monsignor.

But for all her care, she might just as well have set a cross on top of the house and welcomed whole communities of priests and nuns every day. The budding friendship with Miriam had apparently been nipped by the social frost that seemed a permanent part of the Sunrise Point atmosphere. As week after week passed, with no more than the most casual greetings, with never an invitation, never even a call, formal or otherwise, from Miriam or anyone else, the much-vaunted privacy of Sunrise Point began to pall on Caroline more than she would admit.

By now she could almost envy Frank and Irma, spending this Labor Day week end at Crystal Bay with the Hartmans, who had been staying there since mid-August. There the Saturday night country club dances soon made even the newest residents feel at home, and, since most were Catholics, there, too, Mrs. R. Emmett Murray had always been an outstanding figure. At times Caroline was half-inclined to devise some plan whereby she could return to Crystal Bay next summer without losing face. Her one comfort, Paul's connection with Mimi Jordan, could be kept up easily enough by other means.

But on the other hand, she could always take refuge in the future — a future in which she saw herself presiding at official functions, heaping coals of fire on the heads of Miriam and her friends by her particular graciousness toward them. Perhaps, after all, it was only the aristocratic breeding of Sunrise Point hostesses that kept them from accepting a newcomer the very first year. Another summer — especially as the mayor's wife — would surely make her one of them. Having come so far, she was determined not to look back this time. Nor would there be any need to, once the election was won.

At worst, however, all this was a negative irritation, of a kind she had experienced before in far sharper forms. What bothered her more actively was the continued problem of Peter. Though she had never again invited Janet out to stay and had discouraged Peter from dating her in the city, she had come to realize that she was making no progress whatsoever.

Polite and sociable enough, Peter still threw away every opportunity to solidify his position among Mimi's friends. He refused even to be paired with the same girl more than once. Caroline could not imagine whence he inherited such a stubborn nature. Yet more and more she saw in him the makings of a very satisfactory priest. Indeed, who but a priest could get along with so little social sense? Peter seemed to avoid all efforts to draw him out on the subject, but, Caroline told herself, that was only because he had never thought about it seriously enough.

Besides, she asked herself, seeking justification by precedent, what about those noble European families who always destined one son for a career in the Church? Only last winter she had read the memoirs of an Austrian

baroness whose brother, entering the Jesuits in that tradition, had gone far in Franz Joseph's court. Although her own ancestors came of humble Bavarian stock, Caroline had always been fascinated by the atmosphere of imperial Vienna, since the days when she had cut pictures of the then reigning Hapsburgs from the Sunday supplements. She still enjoyed romanticized biographies and nostalgic novels of that era in the beloved capital, for she was convinced that such a society, German in culture and Catholic in creed, was the one in which she would have been most completely at home. There her position as the wife of a professional man would have been equal to anyone's below the titled aristocracy, and even their rank was at least based on centuries of leadership. Thus from her extensive, if second-hand, knowledge of this Continental world, Caroline was satisfied that her plans for Peter were in accord with an accepted Catholic practice, even if it was not often followed in modern America.

"I guess I'll go out and get a little more tan," Peter was saying now. "Coming, Paul?"

"Why don't you go down and bring Mimi back for a game of badminton, Paul?" Caroline suggested, seeing her opportunity for a talk with Peter. "You won't have much time tomorrow, you know."

"Good idea, Mother," said Paul, open to suggestion as usual. She waited until he had disappeared down the stairs to the beach before she went out to the side lawn and sat down on the blanket where Peter stretched, reading.

"Is your book interesting, dear?" she asked. She tried to keep up with his reading since that day last month when she had found him with a novel by that Farrell man

from Chicago, who, even she had heard, was not a nice writer for Catholics to read.

"Yeah, swell." Peter sat up and brushed a persistent lock of hair out of his eyes. Then, catching her meaning, he blushed faintly beneath his tan and added with a smile, "Don't worry, Mother, it's *Monsignor* by Doran Hurley — strictly Catholic Book Club. Uncle Francis brought it out with him, in fact."

"*Monsignor!*" mused Caroline lightly. "It sounds like the perfect book for Uncle. But you, Peter! I've never seen a boy read so much about priests and Catholic things."

Peter's high forehead furrowed as he gazed thoughtfully out over the lake a moment.

"I guess I just like to read about things I know about," he said then. "And I certainly know more about Catholic life than I do about all that glamorous historical stuff Paul likes."

"But it does show which way your mind runs," Caroline observed. "You know, if either of my boys ever does feel a vocation, I wouldn't want him to let *anything* stand in the way."

"Of course not, Mother. But I don't think you'll ever have to worry about losing Paul or me that way."

"You never can tell," Caroline persisted. "Father Carmody was as popular as a boy could be in our young days — and look what a wonderful priest he's made. And, of course, you never *have* gone around with girls much, have you?"

"What about Janet?"

"Oh, Janet!" Caroline gave a tolerant little laugh. "I've always brought you up to look upon her as a first cousin. And till lately I always thought you did."

"Why till lately, Mother?"

"Oh, you know what I mean, Peter. You're growing up now. In a very few weeks you'll be a college man, making new contacts, meeting new people. Don't you think it's about time you outgrew this — well, this little high school affair with Janet?"

"You mean I should give her the air like Paul did Pat Hartman?"

"I didn't say that." Caroline was vexed at her son's bluntness. "Janet is a sweet enough child, we all know. But there are so many girls you could take out, with — shall we say — nicer backgrounds?"

"What's wrong with Janet's background?" Peter's tone had an edge of defiance in it now, Caroline thought.

"Need I go into detail, Peter? Even if she does use your Uncle Frank's name, you know a great many people still remember that her real father was one of the most notorious bootleggers in Lakeport."

"Just as many must remember about Mimi Jordan's father killing him."

"But that was different." Peter's way of reducing things to their bare essentials made it hard for Caroline to keep her tone one of sweet reasonableness. "Until he — lost his mind after the stock market crash, poor Mr. Jordan was a prominent banker, respected by everyone."

"That's not the way Aunt Irma tells it," Peter countered.

"Your Aunt Irma often looks at things differently than we do," said Caroline. "And I'm afraid Janet takes after her."

"But honest, Mother, I have twice as much fun with her as I do with any of Mimi's crowd. We have so much in common —"

Peter could not put into words all he felt about the whole situation, but he did know that he had conscientiously tried Mimi's set and found it wanting. On her recommendation, to be sure, everyone else was very friendly; indeed, they all fairly sparkled with applied charm, as if going out of their way to show that they really felt no difference at all between them and the Murrays. But there were fundamental differences, and they had become increasingly clear to Peter.

Some of the girls were very attractive, he was well aware, with their upswept hair or extreme page-boy bobs, and clothes and make-up such as he had hitherto seen only on models in magazines. Many attended finishing schools further East, and spoke casually of Yale and Harvard proms. Most seemed to have quaint, perky nicknames like the maids in a Dickens novel — Sally, Betsy, Nancy, Polly, and the like. Such distinctions, all new to Peter, had at first made them seem a refreshing change from the girls he had always known.

The boys he had never liked. They had started out frankly suspicious of the twins, and even now Peter resented the patronizing note in their "Murray, old chap" manner. Most of them had "III" or "IV" after their names in the society columns, and their first names were often the last names of related families, well known in Lakeport — Keith, Winthrop, Fenton, and so on. They all favored crew haircuts and sport clothes right out of *Esquire*, worn with conscious sloppiness, and drove low-slung roadsters that belonged to them, not their parents. Most were from Nottingham, Lakeport's "country day school for boys," which by a system of forms, masters, and head boys as much as possible like that of the British "public"

schools, prepared the sons of the very rich for the Ivy League universities, where, of course, they would immediately be pledged by the very best fraternities.

If Peter could have reached a final analysis, he would have concluded that all of Mimi's friends, even the most democratic, had in some way been spoiled by too many privileges and too few responsibilities. Their highest standard of conduct was a very flexible convention which consisted chiefly in saving appearances; church to them was a place to hear nice music and dull sermons at Christmas and Easter. This was the difference Peter sensed and minded most, much as he disliked making a parade of piety or even discussing religion with most people. It was not his faith so much as the whole way of life it meant that made him feel forever an alien in the midst of these new acquaintances. That was what kept even Paul and Pat Hartman from being quite like them. But all this could hardly be explained to his mother, who would never understand why he could not do everything the same as Paul.

"Very well, Peter," said Caroline coldly as she rose, "if you will be stubborn about it. You know I've always let you and Paul choose your own friends. I'm just trying to help you over a phase of puppy love you'll look back on in later years only with embarrassment."

"I know you are, Mother."

Caroline steeled herself against the wistful smile that was Peter's greatest charm.

"And I will think over what you said. But don't be mad if I don't change my mind about Janet."

Peter returned to his book, as Caroline went back into the living room. Well, she had given him his chance, she



thought grimly. If he was unwilling to lead a normal social life like Paul, then surely in the long run he would be far happier in the Church. There, safe from temptations to the willfulness which seemed to be his ruling fault, he could lead a far more useful life than in a world to whose conventions he would not conform. Yes, he was simply too young to know what was best for him.

But if he refused to see this truth just because she pointed it out, perhaps it would be a different story coming from Monsignor. His visit, indeed, had been planned as a trump card for this very purpose; Peter had always been Monsignor's favorite, just as Paul was his grandfather's.

"It's really lovely out now," Caroline reported to the men. "Much too nice for Peter to have his nose in a book all day. I bet he'd love to play badminton with Mimi and Paul if there were a fourth. Why don't you join them, Bob?"

"I was just going to challenge Monsignor to a game of horseshoes," Bob explained.

"Badminton will be less tiring for you, dear. I'll entertain Uncle." Caroline smiled archly. "Anyway, it's been ages since I've had a good visit with him."

Agreeably, Bob went out, and when Paul appeared with Mimi, Peter and his father played doubles against them.

"You have so much to do, Uncle," said Caroline presently, having brought the conversation to a suitable point, "and yet you always have time to help us out when we're worried."

"Are you worried now, Carrie? About the election?"

"Oh, no! If it were only as simple as that!" Caroline

sighed and then achieved a heroic smile. "But I mustn't be telling you all my troubles when I asked you out here to enjoy yourself."

"Now, Carrie, if there's any way I can help, I have every right to know, both as a priest and as your uncle."

"You're so understanding! I suppose I may as well admit, then, I *am* rather worried about Peter."

"Peter?" Monsignor looked surprised. "Such a fine lad! How could he give you cause to worry?"

"Well, it's rather hard to explain. But all summer I've had the feeling that Peter may really have a vocation — only he's fighting against it."

"But why should he do that?"

"I don't know," Caroline confessed. "Perhaps he doesn't want to leave Paul. Or maybe it's Janet's influence, I don't know."

"I always thought he wanted to be a doctor," Monsignor observed. "What makes you think he's inclined to the priesthood?"

"Oh, a mother can tell!" said Caroline easily. "The things he says, the books he reads! And, of course, Peter's always been the quieter of the twins. Even now he seems to take very little interest in going around like Paul does."

"Don't I see him sometimes at St. Henry's dances with Janet?"

"Oh, well, you know how that is. When he has to take a girl somewhere, he turns to Janet as he would to a sister."

"Is that so?" the priest inquired. "But has he any reason to think you or Bob wouldn't approve of a vocation?"

"Oh, no! I've even tried to encourage him a little, but I suppose he knows I'm just trying to be unselfish. He probably realizes how much we'd hate to lose him."

"A peculiar situation all around," Monsignor remarked. "I hardly know what advice to give you."

"Well, what I thought, Uncle," said Caroline, quickly coming to the point, "was that you might give *him* some advice. He has such great respect for your opinion in everything, you know."

"Did he ever talk to any of the priests at the high school about it?"

"Not that I know of. But then the idea of joining an order might not appeal to him so much. He always had you to look up to before he knew any Jesuits."

"Then you think I should tell him more about the life of the secular clergy?"

"Yes, something like that. And how unimportant everything else in the world is beside a true vocation."

The priest was silent a moment. Then he looked at his niece.

"I tell you what, Carrie," he said. "Suppose we let him come to me when *he* feels the need for advice. If he has a real vocation, he will come, sooner or later."

"Then you're not going to say anything to him while you're out here?" Caroline could barely conceal her disappointment.

"No, Carrie. You can't hurry these things. If he's meant to be a priest, he'll be one some day in spite of anything we can say or do one way or the other. But even so, one premature word now might do more harm than good."

"Yes, I see what you mean." Caroline was raging inwardly. "Then you needn't tell anyone I mentioned this at all."

"Of course not, Carrie. And don't worry. If it's God's will, Peter will make up his mind, all in good time."

That might not be soon enough, fumed Caroline. There was such a thing as leaving too much to God! Outwardly, she dropped the subject for a casual discussion of the Catholic side of the campaign, but her thoughts were not so easily diverted. The trouble, she decided, was that Monsignor was just too old fashioned, with his absurdly strict notion of a vocation as a literal divine calling, unaided by human forces. The pastor of St. Charles' would probably prove much the same type, she knew, and the Jesuits at St. Ignatius High, of course, were no longer in a position to influence Peter.

The only ray of hope Caroline could see was the parents' society she had been planning for some time to organize at the college, to compensate for her enforced retirement from the High School Mothers. (Even if such creatures could do nothing else, they could vote.) But, of course, it would still take some time to get to know any of the faculty well enough for her purpose.

Then, in one of those flashes of inspiration to which she owed so much of her success, Caroline remembered that Russell Carmody would be teaching at the college this fall! What would be easier than to ask for him as moderator when she received the president's permission to organize the parents? Beneath the brilliant surface of the intellectual Jesuit priest there must remain something of the boy who had once cared, or thought he cared, for her, Caroline was sure, knowing how much there was in herself of the girl who had loved Bert Jordan.

Russell had certainly been friendly enough at the twins' graduation. She would have to forget that silly feeling that he was always seeing through her. What was there to see, anyhow, but a woman's anxiety for the best

interests of her family as a whole? If Russell had any other ideas . . . well, that was a chance she would have to take. Under the circumstances, he seemed her best possible bet. Yes, he should be willing to do that much for old times' sake. Such a practical, human, *modern* priest was bound to be more co-operative than Uncle, with his unworldly ideals.

The badminton game was interrupted now as the four players came in to hear the two o'clock news flashes, Mimi apparently listening as intently as anyone. Girls were different nowadays, Caroline reflected tolerantly. But she did wonder how Bob could possibly be so interested in anything as remote as a war in Europe, with the primary elections hardly a week away.

## *Chapter 4*

NOT unacquainted with the name and fame of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, Father O'Shea, rector of St. Ignatius College, was only too pleased with her offer to organize a parents' group for fostering school spirit. He readily understood her preference for working with someone she knew well, like Father Carmody. But so busy was Caroline picking up the threads of many other activities dropped since June that it was not until the second Wednesday of September — the day after the primaries made Bob the official Democratic candidate for mayor — that she found time to follow up her intentions.

It was also the day of the opening bridge luncheon of the Newman Guild of the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital, but Caroline seldom stayed for cards at such affairs. Let other women waste their time gossiping and playing bridge, she always said to herself; she had better things to do. She thought with satisfaction of the meeting of the Catholic Charities Board this morning, when the case of that wretched Italian family named Antonucci had come up for final judgment. The father, a bricklayer, had been crippled by a fall last year. Since then they had lived on savings and odd earnings by the mother and children; workmen's compensation was hardly adequate to support so many. Now with all the children back in school after a summer of fruit picking, the mother had

applied to the diocese for help, for since they had managed to hold on to their own home, they were not eligible for city relief.

The bishop, in his softhearted way, had almost been taken in by the woman's melodramatic boohooing, but not Caroline. As she pointed out to the other board members, until the house was sold they could not in conscience waste the funds entrusted to them, any more than the city could. When she learned that there was a son Nick going into his junior year at St. Ignatius College, her righteous indignation had known no bounds. What if he did have a football scholarship? Let him go out and get a job before his parents tried to take money out of the pockets of more deserving families. The government encouraged enough idleness, as it was. As one of the most generous contributors to all diocesan appeals, Caroline felt it her duty to protect the interests of those who, after all, footed the bills.

It was still early afternoon when she parked the car before the entrance of the long, three-story, white-brick building that was St. Ignatius College. About the Main Street grounds — more like a lawn than a campus, she thought — an attendant was raking some of the first-fallen leaves, and here and there underclassmen (for the seniors would not return until next week) gathered about some popular priest or scholastic. Caroline was glad that her boys had come from St. Ignatius High, for, although no favoritism was shown, such students naturally fitted better into the Jesuit routine. Even graduates of the Christian Brothers' Institute, she gathered, got along better than the mere majority from the city's dozen public high schools.

Inside, Caroline recognized Joe Militello at the information booth. The little green and white freshman cap and the name placard around his neck seemed rather out of place for an NYA worker on duty, she thought, though the same devices made the twins look delightfully little-boyish, as their pictures in all the newspapers testified. Twin freshmen always made amusing feature stories — especially the sons of such prominent parents.

"Hello, Mrs. Murray," Joe smiled. "What can I do for you?"

"I've come to see Father Carmody, Joe," said Caroline. "Will you call him, please?"

"He says for you to wait in Parlor A," Joe reported when he had returned from the switchboard.

"Thank you, Joe." Caroline was slightly put out at the message, though not sure whether to blame Father Carmody or Joe.

"Oh, say, Mrs. Murray, did my sister Rita call you up yet about that interview?" Joe asked.

"Your sister? No, Joe. What interview?"

"Well, Rita has charge of the alumnae column of the Mount Carmel paper this year," he explained. "For each issue she's going to interview a different outstanding graduate of the class of 1914."

"Isn't that nice?" said Caroline. "And when will the first issue come out?"

"A week from Friday, but she's got that one arranged."

"Oh, indeed?" Caroline was piqued that any member of the class should be given precedence over her. "Who's the honored person, may I ask?"

"Mrs. Hartman — you know, on account of being the mayor's wife."



"Oh, I see." What Caroline saw was Joe's fine Italian hand in the choice. As she had feared, her Fourth of July arrangements had only thrown him and Pat Hartman together; since then they had been going out as often as Joe could afford. And Loretta, typically enough, did not even seem to mind.

"You'll be next, naturally, two weeks later," Joe went on.

"So nice of Rita to think of me!" said Caroline, but her irony was lost on Joe.

"The paper won't be out till the first Friday of October, but I told her she'd better call you pretty soon if she wanted to make an appointment with you."

"Yes, my time is hardly my own. But if she calls early enough, I may be able to work it in."

"That'll be fine, Mrs. Murray. She'll do a good job on you."

Caroline wondered. As she walked down the corridor, she noticed a large orange and black poster announcing the Freshman-Senior dance, which always opened the social season by welcoming new students to the college. Black cats emphasized the date of Friday, the thirteenth of October. A month from today, she noted, guessing whom her sons would escort; both would undoubtedly be named for the dance committee. Paul, of course, would bring Mimi. Theirs was one summer romance that would survive the winter if Caroline had anything to do with it. As for Peter — well, at least, he should be out of Janet's clutches by then.

The dismal confines of Parlor A were not calculated to cheer any visitor, and Caroline was not used to being kept waiting. All the green reed furniture clashed violently with the high, brown-mottled walls, on one of

which hung a painting of St. Ignatius, seated in rapt contemplation of a human skull. Obviously a room untouched by feminine hands, thought Caroline in distaste, growing more impatient as the minutes passed. Then the door opened, and Russell stood on the threshold, in the long black cassock worn by Jesuits during their teaching hours.

"Caroline, this is a surprise!" he exclaimed, with no apology for his lateness, as she stood up.

"I hope you weren't busy, Father," she said pointedly, but he only replied with that good humor she found so irritating, "Never too busy to see an old friend! I was just preparing some notes for my extension course in adolescent psychology."

"Oh, the one Sister Marcella is going to take." Caroline sat down again, wondering if he was secretly laughing at her. "She says it should be very valuable."

"Does she now? I hope so. Well, I suppose you've come to check up on those famous twins of yours."

"Hardly that," she said, and smiled. "My, you'd think no twins ever went to college before, to read the papers. But we don't really mind, if the publicity helps St. Ignatius."

"It didn't hurt your husband's campaign any, either," said Russell, "if I may judge by the results of the primaries."

"Oh, yes, we're all quite pleased about that," Caroline said, deciding to take the remark as a compliment. "But I've been thinking. All of us parents could really take more interest in the college than we do."

"How do you mean?" Russell looked interested.

"Well," Caroline explained, "most parents of college students aren't in touch with their children as closely

as we are here. In a day school like this, there's so much we could do."

"Translated into still simpler language, Caroline, what exactly does that mean?"

"How you talk, Father!" She concealed her annoyance. "What should it mean? Except that organizing the parents is a good way of making the city more St. Ignatius-conscious. It's done wonders for the high school. The new chapel, you know, was paid for entirely by money from the mothers' card parties."

"Well, well." Russell leaned back in his chair, regarding her with a quizzical smile. "So now you want to do the same for the college. And any good will won for Dr. Murray's campaign, of course, is just a case of virtue's reward."

"You will have your little joke, Father!" With difficulty Caroline managed a fairly convincing laugh. "As if I ever thought of such a thing!"

"As if you didn't!" chuckled the priest. "Even so, though, the idea is a good one. Father Rector was saying only the other day how hard it is to build up traditions in a day school even after sixty years. And the parents are the one advantage we have over a boarding college. Half the fathers are St. Ignatius men themselves — the half that went to college at all."

"Then you think the idea has possibilities?" Caroline asked.

"In more ways than one." Russell's tone was amused. "Of course, it involves a considerable amount of work."

"You know you can count on me for that, Father," said Caroline virtuously. "I have had quite a bit of experience along that line."

"You won't have Irma to handle the details here," he warned. "But I suppose there's always some poor soul willing to play secretary to your president."

Though he spoke in a perfectly natural way, as if her real motives were an open secret between them, this attitude infuriated Caroline more by the minute. But she knew when it was best to smile and say nothing. After all, she had not yet achieved her main objective.

"I knew you'd be just the one for faculty moderator," she said sweetly, "when I talked to Father O'Shea about it."

"I'll have one of the NYA boys make me a list of the parents," Russell promised, as if the conversation were closing.

"Can you tell the twins apart yet?" Caroline asked idly, drawing on her gloves.

"I think so. Paul is the one with the pink cheeks, and Peter is the quiet one. Isn't that right?"

"Yes," said Caroline with a little sigh. "Peter is the quiet one. Too quiet for his own good, I'm afraid."

"Is that so?" Russell asked with new interest.

"He's so different from Paul," Caroline went on. "Paul's a regular Andy Hardy with the girls, you know — Pat Hartman one week, Mimi Jordan the next. But not poor Peter."

"You mean Peter doesn't go out with girls?" Russell's mobile face was intent. He was not toying with her now, Caroline realized triumphantly.

"Not really. He goes with no one but Janet — and, as you know, she's been brought up like a first cousin to the boys — almost a sister, in fact."

"Indeed? But go on, you intrigue me. The psychological

differences between twins are among the most fascinating phenomena in my field — and the most baffling.”

“Really?” Caroline was encouraged. “Then Peter ought to make an interesting study for you.”

“Yes, he might, at that. It’s strange, isn’t it? Same heredity, same environment and yet so different.”

“Oh, completely.” Caroline followed up her advantage. “Paul is so open — such a good mixer.”

“Obviously an extrovert, while Peter is an introvert,” Russell diagnosed. “I gathered that much from seeing them around school, but I never would have guessed Peter’s maladjustment. Have you any idea what might be the cause?”

“Well, yes,” Caroline admitted. “I think the whole trouble is that Peter has a vocation, but he can’t make up his mind to follow it. If only he would! Lots of boys younger than he went off to join the Order right from high school. Lord knows he’s not easily influenced, but I think he needs someone to guide him — some outside person.”

“Someone who can analyze his problems objectively, without the natural partiality of a parent?”

“Exactly!” exclaimed Caroline, ready to forget all Russell’s little barbs for the sake of his perfect grasp of the situation. Yes, she thought, there was nothing like a feminine appeal for help to bring out a man’s better side. No one could be more tactful or understanding than Russell in his present mood.

“I’ve done my best with Peter,” she continued wistfully, “but I’m just about at the end of my rope. You will try to advise him, won’t you, Father?”

“Of course,” said Russell. “Both as a priest and a

psychologist, I'll do whatever I can for him. That's part of my job as student counselor. But why do you suppose he's so troubled about following a vocation? Wouldn't you approve?"

"Father, what a question! Wouldn't any Catholic mother make the sacrifice, if necessary? Leaving Paul would be the worst part, I think." Yes, blame it all on Paul, she decided, anxious to minimize Peter's connection with Janet. "Different as they are, they've always been just like the one person — too much so, perhaps."

"So I've noticed. There's no chance of Paul's feeling a call to the religious life also, is there?"

"Oh, no! That's what creates the conflict in Peter's mind, I suppose. But I'm sure you'll come to agree with me that the Church is really the ideal place for a boy of his peculiar temperament." Since her talk with Monsignor, she had been doing her rationalizing in even stronger terms; Russell would not be convinced by half-hearted statements. "It's such a lovely life, anyway. I often wish I'd joined the convent, like Rosemary."

"Do you, Caroline?" Russell's brown eyes held that teasing glint again, and she knew that she had broken the spell of their momentary meeting of minds. But no matter; her words about Peter had made just the impression she had hoped.

"I suppose the sooner we get started on this parents' society the better," she said briskly, as she picked up her purse and arose. "Friday evenings are usually best."

"Shall we try to plan the first meeting, then, for the first Friday of October?"

"So many other groups meet the first Friday — like the Mount parents. How about the second?"

"Well, I expect to be giving a novena down at St. Ignatius Church around that time. But I suppose I can manage it." Russell held the door open.

"Well, then, Father, you can call me about anything that has to be done," said Caroline. "Anything at all! By the way, when will the twins be out of class? I can give them a lift home."

"They should be through at three today, I think. You can wait in the library if you like."

"Thank you. Thank you for everything!" Caroline beamed at him. "I knew I could depend on you, Russell — I mean, Father. It's nice to know that *someone* understands."

## Chapter 5

TO THE more blasé upperclassmen at St. Ignatius, the three days of the annual retreat frankly meant no more than a welcome break in routine, interrupted by stretches of preaching as trite as it was well intended; but freshmen, even those from the two Catholic high schools, were generally much impressed — especially so this year, when their sessions — held, as usual, in the gymnasium, apart from the rest of the school — were conducted by the popular new professor of psychology, Father Carmody.

Thus there was a note of real spiritual exaltation in the two hundred voices of the class of '43, as, to Joe Militello's accompaniment on the wheezy portable organ, they set the old gym echoing with:

Ho-ly Gaw-awd, we prai-aise Thy Name,  
Lord of aw-all, we bow-ow before Thee.

After three days of intense soul searching new to most, the final morning of the retreat, always the first Friday of October, brought a sense of lighthearted relief — not unaided, perhaps, by the prospect of a free breakfast to follow, though only those from St. Ignatius High could anticipate the invariable menu of oranges, hard rolls, and coffee. At the moment, the pungent fragrance of the benediction incense still pervaded the air, floating in little swirls of smoke on the autumn sunlight that slanted down from the high windows.



Awaiting the final notes of the hymn, Father Carmody stood with the back of his gold-fringed cope toward the retreatants, flanked by the Murray twins, whom, to the envy of many, he had chosen to serve on the improvised altar throughout the services. A picturesque trio they made, the dark-haired priest in his rich sacred vestments, the blond acolytes in red cassocks and snowy surplices.

All dropped respectfully to their knees now, as the priest, preceded by Paul tinkling the altar bell and followed by Peter, carried the Eucharist from the building. Immediately, there was a general rush for the door and across the football field toward the main building, though Peter and Paul, of course, conscious of their responsibility, walked sedately with Father Carmody, to the same destination but by way of the street. Only after the Host was lodged in the tabernacle of the school chapel did they take off their robes in the vestry.

"What's your hurry, boys?" asked Father Carmody, unwilling to lose such an opportunity to talk to them. "There'll be plenty of food left."

"Not if I know the freshman class!" Peter was pulling off the surplice over his head.

"When the Jevvies give something away, it's not to be missed," laughed Paul, rapidly unbuttoning his cassock.

Russell laughed too. The many unpriestly qualities once attributed to Jesuits were now a standing joke — like the popular saying that the "S.J." after their names meant "Soft Job."

"You're both coming to the Sodality meeting today, aren't you?" he inquired. "The winner of the play contest is going to be announced."

"Oh, sure," answered Paul, already moving toward the

door, but Peter said, "Sorry, Father, this is my day to teach catechism down at St. Dominic's—for the St. V. de P., you know."

As he heard them clattering downstairs to the cafeteria in the basement, Russell again experienced that sense of complete bafflement with which the Murray twins always left him. "Brushed off" was the expression, he thought. Never in all his days as a Jesuit had he been so brushed off by anyone, much less by a couple of schoolboys whom he had gone out of his way to befriend. Rather, having long since overcome his own youthful shyness, he took pride in his ability to win the wholehearted confidence of any student.

He was too shrewd a psychologist not to recognize that these pleasant, transient friendships in a sense compensated him for the emotional satisfaction most laymen found in their families. Instead of being limited to a few individuals, his paternal instincts were sublimated and diffused among the countless boys he had taught and would teach. Indeed, he could come closer to them than their own fathers, for they would tell him things as a priest that their parents would never know. But he also realized and guarded against the easy temptation to let such personal satisfaction become more important to him than the ultimate motive behind all the life he had chosen. Even the guidance of youth was good only in so far as it carried on the work of the Order and therefore that of God, Russell tried always to keep in mind.

The Murray twins, apparently as popular and well-adjusted as any two boys could be, had interested him but slightly until their mother's visit. Since then they had become a puzzle that grew more tantalizing as time

went on and he still came no nearer the solution. If Peter had a vocation, as his mother continued to hint in telephone conversations about the parents' society, Russell wanted to help him follow it into the Order where he himself had found such content. If not, he wanted to rid Caroline of the idea once and for all. But to sound out Peter's real attitude on so serious a question, it was first necessary to establish a certain bond of intimacy, and this was where the priest, for almost the first time, had to confess failure.

Courteous and friendly though both boys were, he hardly knew them any better now than that day last June when he had first laid eyes on them. Jesuit trained, grand-nephews of a monsignor, they certainly could not be "priest shy," like some of the boys from the public high schools. Yet some indefinable reserve always kept him at arm's length. On the surface, at least, they had inherited just enough of their mother's cool poise to stop Russell in his tracks and leave him inwardly as bewildered and ill at ease as he might have expected them to feel.

Following a procedure that usually worked, he had taken them to dinner and the theater once, and they had reciprocated, but even over midnight coffee in the most secluded booth of a downtown restaurant, conversation had been utterly casual. All his leading remarks about the joys of the priestly life had been left hanging in mid-air or else were swept away in a stream of chatter, as far as he could see. Three was still a crowd, even if two were as close as Peter and Paul. Or perhaps because of that. At school no sooner would he begin a chat with Peter than Paul would turn up, or vice versa. They were inseparable; Caroline was certainly right about that.

Indeed, as moderator of the Sodality, Russell saw more of Paul, who, having been sodality prefect at high school, evidently appreciated the social contacts to be made on the several occasions during the year when girl and boy sodalists from all the high schools and colleges of the diocese gathered, presumably to settle some burning Catholic issue of the day. Perhaps Paul already had his eye on the prefectship of the college Sodality, which carried with it the presidency of the whole diocesan conference.

By one means or another, all the more promising freshmen, including even Peter, had been brought into the Sodality, which under Father Carmody's reviving influence was becoming a veritable honor society for present and future campus leaders — especially those who would never have joined the only other religious organization, the school's St. Vincent de Paul Society. The latter group, which did both spiritual and material welfare work in the poorer parishes of the city, seemed to Russell worthy enough, and good experience for its moderator, that gangling young scholastic named Noonan; but hardly calculated to attract the average undergraduate. All very well for students of social science, no doubt, but for an Arts man like Peter Murray to neglect the Sodality in favor of such pursuits was so unusual that Russell could only conclude that Caroline might well be right about her son's religious inclination.

Peter had not even submitted an entry to the Sodality one-act play contest, Father Carmody's pet project, the winner of which was to be produced by the college players at the various schools of the conference, in honor of the approaching four-hundredth anniversary of the

chartering of the Order. *Soldier of God*, Paul's facile and colorful episode from the life of Pere Marquette, though obviously written with a minimum of research and a maximum of imagination, would play the best of any, Russell's keen theatrical sense recognized, so to that he was reluctantly awarding the prize.

The whole attitude of the Murray twins was especially disappointing because he had expected that in Lakeport, where so many families had known him all his life, there would be no problem in winning the confidence of the younger generation. More ambitious men might have considered the intellectual backwater of St. Ignatius a virtual exile in this quatercentennial year, which would be celebrated with such ceremony at all the larger Jesuit institutions, but Russell realized that suavely presenting the Catholic viewpoint at influential gatherings in New York or Washington, like more than one of his fellow Jesuits, was not for him. Although at times the sight of the *Queen's Work* pamphlet rack in the first floor corridor made him wish he had been sent to St. Louis, the center of so much useful writing activity, he had long since learned that it was not for him to say where he could serve the Order best.

However, he did find the Lakeport social setup as discouraging to Catholics as ever it had been. Although the proudest boast of the chamber of commerce was the city's peculiar blend of "Eastern culture and Midwestern vigor," to Russell it seemed rather to combine the snobbery of the one with the crudeness of the other.

Some metropolitan areas, he knew, were so vast that the Catholic and non-Catholic worlds could revolve without ever colliding. Then, too, in a few cities, like New

Orleans, Catholics were not only accepted by the aristocracy but *were* the aristocracy, as in Latin America and most of Continental Europe. In Baltimore, for instance, where he had last been stationed, descendants of Carrolls and Calverts were no less distinguished than Lowells and Cabots in Boston. But this was far from typical. In ordinary cities like Lakeport — even in sections first civilized by French Jesuits or Spanish Franciscans — Catholics, despite every material success, were in the last analysis still regarded by the older families as suspiciously as in the most bigoted southern town. Positive expression of such prejudice, of course, had gone continually further under cover since the violent days of the Know-Nothing movement; and yet it was scarcely fifteen years since the fiery cross of the Ku Klux Klan had last flared in Lakeport.

Perhaps this attitude was the only means of restricting an upper class that, unlike its European equivalent, was without title and in no position to despise “trade.” Undeniably, it was convenient, disposing as it did of at least half the German-American population and all the Irish, Italians, and Polish at one fell swoop. Such distinctions were an anachronism anywhere, Russell thought, but especially so in America, where the standards were so arbitrary that they varied from city to city.

This particular form of discrimination was all the more insidious because, unlike the more active hostility toward other minorities, its manifestations were so subtle as to be apparent only to those who felt them. To be sure, exclusion from a club was by no means as outrageous as exclusion from the ballot, and being snubbed was scarcely comparable to being lynched, but in their minor way these things reflected the same blind intolerance that

underlay so much of the world's trouble. This was the unhealthy soil that produced men like Bert Jordan and, more commonly, women like Caroline.

Social barriers always did strange things both to those outside and those within the pale, Russell knew, and Caroline's kind was by no means confined to any one class or creed. Nor was environment entirely responsible. Irma and Loretta shared her background without being in the least like her, and Rosemary, exposed even to the same social glitter in wartime Washington, had turned out just the opposite. Perhaps Bert Jordan's mortal blow to her pride was the thing that had hardened Caroline's normal social ambition into a driving obsession, as Russell had sensed at the time.

But since their interview in Parlor A he was no longer so sure. He even wondered if his view of her had been one of those positive, confident judgments of youth which time inevitably modifies. Her devotion to Catholic philanthropy had become such a legend in Lakeport, could it be that she really had been mellowed by the years? To be sure, in some ways she was still the same charming, relentless Caroline, given to rationalizing until she doubtless convinced even herself that her motives were of the purest. Her bland innocence of any selfish interest in the parents' society was characteristic enough. But perhaps, after all, she only lacked the Irish ability to laugh at her own pretensions, and so took herself too seriously. Russell had no wish to misjudge her.

What inclined him most to this open-mindedness was what she had told him about Peter. It was no easy thing for any woman to give up a son to the Church, and of all mothers in the world he would have expected Caroline

to be the most clinging and possessive. She would fight any possible vocation to the last ditch, he would have said. And yet she had come to him and deliberately asked him to help Peter follow what was evidently a natural bent for the priesthood. That must have taken an amount of self-mastery that for Caroline was truly admirable, and, knowing this, Russell could easily forgive her double purpose in organizing the parents.

No doubt he could understand her pride because pride was his own besetting sin, he told himself — pride in his intellectual prowess as a psychologist who used both reason and revelation. He liked nothing better than refuting the popular notion that the Church closed its eyes to the findings of modern science. With proper permission, he had even plumbed the depths of Freud, Krafft-Ebing and their Viennese school, rejecting their mechanistic theories but accepting their objective discoveries.

So eager was he to add to his own empirical knowledge of this limitless field and use it to help others that he usually went out of his way to invite the intimate confidence of any boys he thought might have problems troubling them. Knowing that a shy counselor only makes others shy, he had developed a genial Irish charm that quickly won the average boy, but in his desire to help, it seldom occurred to him that there were some who neither needed nor wanted such help. Accustomed to appreciative response, the priest felt distinctly rebuffed by such occasional reserve.

In these rare cases he scarcely knew what to do, and usually his friendly interest quickly cooled into complete indifference — a reaction that often bewildered those who



simply had nothing to confide. But the Murray twins, whether cultivated or cut, remained as pleasantly aloof as ever, and this unaccountable aloofness was what hurt and puzzled Father Carmody.

Such was his checkmated feeling even in the noisy cafeteria, as he gaily bantered the admiring freshmen who crowded around him — all the leading freshmen except the two whom he wanted most to understand. Inhaling the smell of coffee that mingled, not unpleasantly, with the drifting cigarette smoke, he watched some sophomores make Joe Militello shout football cheers while standing atop the battered piano that was one of the undergraduate heirlooms.

"Well, Joe, you'll be all set for the rally tomorrow night, won't you?" laughed Russell when the boy, having satisfied the sophomores, climbed down and came over to him.

"Oh, you bet, Father! And wait till you see who I'm bringing!"

With a smile of dismissal to the others, Russell took Joe's arm and drew him toward the door.

"Joe," he said as they walked down the corridor, "I know you've got your NYA hours for the week in, but I wonder if you'd mind doing a little extra work for me tomorrow morning? I want to get all those announcements for the parents in the mail tomorrow, you know, and I'm pretty busy these days with that novena."

"Glad to, Father," smiled Joe happily.

"I'll expect you about nine then. You're a good kid, Joe."

Pleased by the boy's unquestioning loyalty, Russell gave him a pat on the back, and went on upstairs to get the lecture notes for his first class. The clever boys could be

more consciously amusing, he had learned, but, unlike Joe's type, they seldom revealed anything more than they intended about themselves or anyone else. Joe would easily make his life an open book to anyone interested, and Russell could only wish there was more in it to interest him. But it was always the most carefully guarded personalities, the hardest nuts to crack, that challenged him.

He forgot the recalcitrant Murrays, however, as he taught the senior class rational psychology and then educational psychology to those planning to be teachers. But he was reminded again when, leaving the priests' refectory after the midday meal, he encountered the scholastic Noonan.

"Well, I hear you've got Peter Murray teaching one of your catechism classes, Father Noonan," he said conversationally. Technically, Jesuits not yet ordained were still called "Mister," but Russell knew from experience how much they liked to be called "Father," once they were advanced enough to be sent out teaching.

"Oh, yes, Father Carmody." The younger man colored violently on the rare occasions when he was noticed by the poised and popular professor of psychology, whose ease with the boys he obviously admired. "Peter seems a fine boy — very much interested in our work."

Russell checked an unkind impulse to say, "It's nice you can get *someone* interested," and merely observed, "I don't suppose you know much about him otherwise, do you?"

"Well, not yet. But he asked me to go to a movie with him this evening."

"You mean with him and his brother, of course?"

"No. I believe he said Paul is going to some affair at Lakeport Seminary with a young lady. But if there's anything you'd like to see Peter about, Father, I'm sure he'd be glad to have you come along tonight."

"No, thanks." Russell quickly hid his unpleasant surprise behind his usual jovial manner. "Well, just don't let him take you to see *The Women!* The Legion of Decency has condemned it."

They both laughed, but Russell's feelings were anything but gay. More mystified than ever that a shy scholastic had succeeded where he had failed, he looked neither left nor right as he walked slowly through the first-floor corridor, his black cape swirling about him.

Wrapped in his own thoughts, he scarcely realized that he had passed Joe Militello until it would have been awkward to go back and speak to him. "Carmody never spoils a good exit," he could imagine some of the more perceptive undergraduates commenting. Suddenly he was laughing at himself, and his momentary pique had vanished. Joe would understand, of course, and turn up tomorrow morning without fail.

He himself had been taking the Murrays' attitude far too personally, he decided. He should have known better. It was simply the complete oneness of the twins that shut other people out; even Joe was not as intimate with them as might be supposed. Was it good for them to be so dependent on each other? he wondered. It certainly limited any real friendship with either boy as an individual. This aspect of the situation struck him especially today, in the light of the lecture he was to give his adolescent psychology class on the subject of emotional fixations.

## *Chapter 6*

"STILL another instance I might mention," came Father Carmody's voice from the lecture platform, "seems to combine the elements of some of those we have already discussed. While not perhaps an emotional fixation in the strict sense, it does have latent possibilities in that direction. The case I have in mind is a pair of twin brothers of my own acquaintance, about midway through the adolescent period. There may be an element of narcissism in their attachment, for their resemblance is striking, as is usual in identical twins."

Dutifully, the thought was recorded in the notebooks of the extension class—a typical assortment of juniors and seniors allowed to take it to make up their required number of education hours, a few Christian Brothers, and a great many school teachers and nuns doing graduate work.

The interest with which most of the students hung on his every word made Sister M. Marcella Quinn very proud of her cousin. Russell had always been her favorite even when everyone else had expected more of Larry, and she was glad that his subsequent career had proved her right.

"Although outwardly they appear perfectly normal," he continued, "as I daresay they are in most respects, the emotional bond between these brothers is such that

I fear it may have disastrous effects on their social adjustment. One, for example, goes out with no girls except one who is practically a first cousin — possibly from a subconscious reluctance to compete with his twin in relations to the opposite sex outside the family circle.”

As he paused, gazing out the window until the class should catch up, Sister Marcella became aware that an undergraduate near her — a blue-jowled football player named Antonucci — was making efforts to attract the attention of another across the aisle. Surprised by such conduct in an extension class, she cast the offender a reproving glance. But he was looking past her, and with a shock she realized that his thick lips were forming the words “The Murrays!”

The Murrays, of course. She should have recognized the description of Janet. What ever had made Russell think of using them as an example?

“Then again,” he went on, “it is said that one of the boys feels a vocation for the priesthood, but hesitates to follow it because it would mean leaving the other.”

That was news to Sister Marcella, but, of course, Russell saw Peter and Paul a great deal more than she did. If what he said was true, then perhaps their attachment was too close.

“So it is clear,” he concluded, “how such a mutually exclusive and inclusive relationship may retard their full development as individuals.”

Rather strong language, thought the nun, for two such wholesome youngsters as the Murrays. She was half inclined to say as much to Russell after class, but then decided against this. You could not tell these professors anything, though at times she felt a distinct urge to remind

one or two of them that even the pope's infallibility applied only to matters of faith and morals.

Coming out of the room after class, Sister Marcella, walking with a teacher she knew, said guardedly, "Well, Miss Corrigan, what did you think of today's lecture?"

"Oh, Sister, isn't Father Carmody the loveliest speaker! I wonder if I could get him to address the next meeting of the Happy Death Society?"

"I'm sure you could," said the nun, deciding that the name of the Bona Mors Confraternity was better left untranslated. Such elderly teachers seemed to follow fads in new priests just as they did in new tearooms, she reflected, but if an inveterate gossip like May Corrigan took no notice of the remarks about the twins, then in all probability neither had anyone else.

Sister Marcella was again reminded of Russell's words as she was returning to Mount Carmel on a cross-town bus. A block from St. Ignatius she saw Peter Murray get on; then a few blocks later, Paul. They were dressed identically, of course, even to the freshman equipment, but they sat on opposite sides of the bus and took not the slightest notice of each other. Had they quarreled? She wondered only for a moment.

When she saw the puzzled looks of the other passengers, as if they could not believe their eyes, she realized that this was one of the little jokes the twins liked to play on strangers. Smiling, she explained the situation to her companion nun. Peter and Paul *were* perfectly ordinary, healthy boys — just the kind she liked to see go out with Mount girls. The type Mother Celestine, in assemblies before social events, primly described as "fine young Catholic gentlemen." Fiddlesticks for Russell, thought

Sister Marcella, with his emotional fixations and social maladjustments!

All Mount Carmel was so busy preparing for this evening, the first monthly parents' night of the year, that the nun had no time to ponder on the Murrays or anyone else until she was seated at the desk of the room where daily she taught Latin. She brought with her today's issue of the Mount Carmel *Echo*, the student newspaper, so as to be well informed on the current extracurricular activities of her pupils before their parents arrived. The mothers, especially those whose offspring did not shine academically, always expected the sisters to know all the other accomplishments of Joanne or Mary Lou — "and not just because she's my own daughter, Sister." Among Sister Marcella's five large classes, this was no easy task.

Most of the news items were not particularly interesting to older eyes, but she did take time to read all of the alumnae column, for it was at her suggestion that the nun in charge of the paper had dubiously entrusted this department to Rita Militello. In another year, Rita would be forever beyond the influence of the Mount, Sister Marcella realized, and she felt that the school should make one last effort to turn her into something more like a lady. She hoped that the frequent contact with a variety of older women outside her normal sphere, most of them comfortably established either in marriage or careers, might inspire Rita with ideas of behavior she would obviously never learn at home.

Mrs. Militello was undoubtedly a devoted mother, and a pious one, who raised all her children ardent Catholics; but what could she know of the social standards of her

daughter's contemporaries? It was inevitable, then, that Rita should follow the patterns she most admired on the screen, in cheap fiction or in neighborhood girl friends who had quit school for work. Most Italian girls at the Mount were accepted without question by those of Irish or German descent, but Rita belonged to an ill-adjusted minority, who, sensing the lack in their background, remained perpetually on the defensive. It was this insecurity that was reflected in her constant, nervous animation, her gales of raucous giggles, her ceaseless stream of chatter, and all the other overdone mannerisms that made her as conspicuous to her classmates as to her teachers.

For three years the Mount had been fighting a losing battle against the outside factors — and yet Rita was not entirely hopeless, Sister Marcella felt sure. If only she could learn to tone down and relax and think before she talked, she might be quite a different girl. At any rate, the alumnae assignment could do her no harm; the only danger was that Rita might make a stronger impression on the subjects of her interviews than they did on her. The current article, though evidently somewhat edited by the moderator, still oozed a cloying saccharinity reminiscent of a movie magazine, except that in Rita's case such naïvete was only too sincere. Reading between the lines, Sister Marcella could easily picture what must actually have taken place:

The name of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray is come across in regard to so many different things, that it did not seem possible to us that one woman could be able to do so much. We decided to find out how this could be. Well, we found out in a most gracious interview, but, of course,



we could not take up too much of Mrs. Murray's valuable time.

"I am flattered," she laughed merrily, sitting in the midst of her luxuriant living room at 324 Crescent Parkway, "that the Mount Carmel *Echo* should consider me an alumna outstanding in Catholic Action. Yes, I have held the chairmanship of the Women's Division of Catholic Charities for some years now, but I feel it's no more than my duty."

To the question as to how she became so interested in social work, Mrs. Murray responded as follows: "It's a long story. Since high school days at the dear old Mount, I have always done some such work. The Guild there, I'm sure, is still carrying on nobly. When I belonged, many times I used to come home crying at the sad things I saw. I remember one such time when my uncle, now Vicar-General of the diocese, then plain Msgr. Straubmeyer, was visiting us. 'Stop crying and *do* something,' he told me. I never forgot that. Now I stop crying and try to do something."

Mrs. Murray laughs so easy now, the tears must all have been turned to doing something, like her famous uncle the Msgr. said, and as a reward laughter must have taken the place of the tears. Just then noticing the picture of her handsome twin sons on the piano, we asked her to tell us about them.

"Peter and Paul are freshmen at St. Ignatius College this year," she told us, "and right now very much interested in the football season there. I have become quite a sport fan myself. With two boys, you know, one learns to cheer for the home team with the best of them."

Next we questioned: "With two such sons, did you never get interested in any of the clubs having to do with their schools?"

While looking guilty, Mrs. Murray admitted that she had for eight years been president of the St. Charles' Borromeo Mothers' Club, which has since broken up, and for the next four years president of the St. Ignatius High School Mothers. At present, at the request of Father O'Shea, head of St. Ignatius College, she is organizing such an organization there. Like she says, there

is so much such clubs can do for youth, especially from a cultural and social standpoint.

We next learned that as head of the Newman Guild of the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital of the Sisters of Charity, Mrs. Murray spends one whole morning a month brightening the lives of the patients there. By now we were beginning to feel a little mixed up, even though Mrs. Murray is a big, healthy woman. She was gowned in a blue wool dress, matching her large blue eyes and looking very artistic.

"Where do you get the time to do so much?" we asked then.

"Maybe I cannot say no." Mrs. Murray seemed to think a moment and then went on: "I guess I just love to keep busy, now that my boys are raised. Everything can always be fit in, with proper planning."

Talking of her work at the hospital led Mrs. Murray to speak of her husband. He is Health Commissioner Murray, who used to be at the head of the hospital staff and now he is running on the Democrat ticket for mayor. But Mrs. Murray admits she knows little of politics.

"It goes without saying," she added, "that even though Judge Fenton is a very fine old man, all of us Mount girls would rather see another Catholic mayor of Lakeport."

Mrs. Murray has lived in Lakeport all her life, except for her four years at Trinity College, Washington, D. C. "I have been so happy here," she says, "so much wonderful work, so many fine friends — especially those I made while at the Mount. Yes, Lakeport has been very good to me."

We then left, knowing Mrs. Murray's modesty had kept her from telling half the story. There was the Bishop's Committee for Catholic Home Life, the Diocesan Speakers' Bureau, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Catholic Daughters, the St. Charles Rosary and Altar Society. And then there are school groups such as the I.F.C.A., the Trinity Alumnae, and, of course, our own Mount Carmel Alumnae Association. Mrs. Murray helped found many of these and she either holds office or has

in all of them. But for this information we had to go to Mrs. Frank X. Straubmeyer, Mrs. Murray's sister-in-law, who on her kind suggestion we interviewed soon afterward for our next column.

We told ourself, yes, indeed, the little girl who cried and was told to "stop crying and do something" certainly did something. Many years away now was the Mount Carmel Guild of high school days. Today we see the National Conference, the Catholic Charities, and everything else!!! It really can be done. We didn't believe it could, but we do now.

Caroline had certainly dragged in every one in the family, Sister Marcella noted without surprise — every one except her parents. Only a week ago Saturday, while downtown with one of the kitchen nuns, she had met old Mrs. Straubmeyer in the Seneca Market, happily shopping for a family feast on the next day. But from the wistfully pressed invitation for a call the very next time Sister Marcella had visiting permission, the nun could imagine the empty intervals between the children's visits.

So, knowing Caroline as she did, she found the heavily applied charm of the interview rather dismaying as well as amusing. What if all her zeal for Catholic Action were no more sincere than this? The sheer halo of such super-Catholicism was enough to dazzle far shrewder eyes than Rita Militello's. Of course, Sister Marcella was no longer in a position to judge fairly, but at times she could not but wonder whether the devouring social ambition their college years had awakened in Caroline, however worthily sublimated on the surface, had ever really been outgrown. She kept such speculations to herself, of course, and they apparently never occurred to anyone else — doubtless because, as far as she knew, no one else had ever guessed

or even suspected what the loss of Bert Jordan had meant to Caroline.

Among the first parents to arrive this evening was Mrs. Militello, dressed with all her usual misguided care, even the nun could not fail to notice. When they had discussed Rita's fair progress in Latin IV, Sister Marcella felt that some compliment to her journalism was in order.

"My, that's quite an article Rita has in the *Echo* this week," she said, trying not to let politeness lead her too far from truth.

"Oh, you like it, Sister?" beamed Mrs. Militello. "Yes, my Rita is a great one for the writing."

"Mrs. Murray must be very pleased by such a tribute."

"Ah, she's such a fine lady! My Rita says she wants to be just like her when she grows up."

"Isn't that nice!" Such a future for Rita seemed hardly probable to the nun — and just as well. From what she gathered, Patricia Hartman was more likely to be the Caroline of tomorrow. "Do you know Mrs. Murray well?"

"Not real well. But my Joe goes to school with her boys, so down at the high school I knew her, and pretty soon at the college, too, from the parents' club."

"The twins are such nice boys, aren't they?"

"Oh, yes! My Joe likes them fine. And I like for him to go with them, too."

"You're perfectly right. There aren't two finer boys in Lakeport." Reminded of what she had heard in the extension class, Sister Marcella felt the need to praise the twins even more strongly than usual. "I suppose some of the upperclassmen at the college are bound to resent all the attention they've been getting lately, but that's not their fault."

She dropped the subject as she saw Irma in the doorway.

"Hello, Mrs. Militello. How are you, Sister?" Irma came over toward the desk. "Well, I guess I'm early, after all."

"As if you were ever late for anything, Irma," said the nun, smiling.

"Well, last night I started that novena down at St. Ignatius Church, in honor of the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary, you know. Of course, they have services every couple of hours all day, but I wanted to make the evening one."

"That's the one Father Carmody gives?" said Mrs. Militello. "My Rita started that, too, mostly to hear how he talks. Since my Joe started to college, we hear nothing but Father Carmody this and Father Carmody that. I only wish I had time to hear him myself, but —"

"You owe yourself a little time off now and then," Irma urged. "And it just so happens I need a fourth to fill a table at the Catholic Daughters' card party tomorrow — for the scholarship fund at Stella Maris, you know. If you don't mind being asked on the last minute like this, why don't you come?"

"Oh, there's so much to do at home," Mrs. Militello protested.

"You can do some in the morning. And Rita won't have school. Let her get dinner."

"On Saturday afternoon she helps out in the beauty shop in Henderson's store. My husband's niece is head operator there. So I don't think —"

"Oh, come on now!" Irma persisted, laughingly. "You can't turn down a good cause like this. Why, Rita might win the scholarship next year!"

"Well, I haven't played the contract bridge since I stopped belonging to the High School Mothers. At our parish parties, it is always pedro." Mrs. Militello was evidently weakening.

"Oh, none of us are experts! There's a fashion show included, too, with the Stella Maris girls modeling. And all for a dollar!"

"Well, then, for you, Mrs. Straubmeyer. I'll fix it some way at home."

"That's the spirit! I know you'll enjoy yourself. You do know Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Hartman, don't you?"

"Mrs. Murray, yes. Mrs. Hartman I have met only a few times when I had to go places with my husband."

"Oh, you'll like her, I'm sure!"

Irma was probably quite right, thought Sister Marcella. In fact, if she knew her old classmates, Mrs. Militello would feel far more at ease talking to Loretta for the first time than she ever would with Caroline.

## Chapter 7

AFTER getting her husband off to the city hall, Mrs. Militello, instead of going back to sleep a few hours as usual on Saturday mornings, stayed up to get Joe's breakfast, despite his protests. She was glad of the rare chance to visit with her eldest son undisturbed by the other children.

"Gee, I hope Father Carmody isn't mad at me for anything," Joe said, between mouthfuls of cereal.

"Mad at you, Joe? When you give him the only morning you got to yourself? You never worked so hard in the summer even!"

"Yes, not everyone would do all I do for him," Joe admitted ruefully. "I'll bet the Murrays wouldn't, even after he picked them for his altar boys in the retreat."

"Those Murrays, Joe." Mrs. Militello was reminded of Sister Marcella's remarks. "Everyone still likes them at school?"

"Oh, sure, they're good kids."

"Who're good kids?" Rita yawned and slumped into her place at the table, her frizzy black hair uncombed.

"You better hurry up or you won't make the eight o'clock Mass," Mrs. Militello warned; she had hoped Rita would go to church before breakfast, for daily attendance at Mass was part of the novena.

"Oh, I'll get there before it's over!" Rita swallowed

some oatmeal. "Who're them good kids you were talkin about?"

"No one you'd know," said Joe, just as his mother answered, "The Murray twins."

"Oh, them!" Rita put on her expression of intense boredom.

"Sour grapes, if you ask me," grinned Joe.

"Who's askin' ya?" Rita made a face. "Believe me, I'll take Nick Antonucci any day!"

"If you can get him!" Joe laughed.

"Oh, yeah? A lot you know! He walked me home from our Children of Mary dance last night. And he asked me to go out with him after the football rally tonight!" Rita announced triumphantly. Then she softened her tone. "Oh, say, Joe, Nick's got to ride with the team in the parade, so how's about me gettin' a ride with you and Pat Hartman?"

"Well, gee, I don't know." Joe looked reluctant. "After all, if we're going to use Pat's car, I wouldn't —"

"If that Pat's such a nice girl, she won't mind giving your own sister a ride," said Mrs. Militello decisively.

"Oh, all right, then," muttered Joe. "But if Rita's making that novena, I think she ought to go there and then take a streetcar out to the college afterwards."

"Aw, go on, I can skip it one night, can't I?" Rita took a gulp of coffee. "But anyways, I was going to tell you. Did Nick ever give me the lowdown on them sweet Murray boys!"

"What do you mean?" Mrs. Militello turned from the stove.

"You'd never guess in a million years!" Rita let her words sink in as she drank some more coffee.



"What are you talking about?" Joe demanded.

"You mean you haven't heard?" Rita snickered. "Gee, Nick says everyone at St. Ignatius knows."

"Knows what?" Joe frowned impatiently.

"Well — " Rita's eyes were popping — "last night I just happened to say how good-looking the Murrays are. Then Nick says, 'Oh, them two birds!' He says they're practically goin' steady with each other. It looks awful funny, he says. Even some priest at St. Ignatius says so."

"My God, what things you kids talk about!" Mrs. Militello shook her head at her daughter's confused nonsense. "But don't you go saying anything that ain't nice about the Murrays, Rita."

Joe smiled. "That's Nick Antonucci for you. But where did he ever get that crazy idea? Peter and Paul have always gone together. Why wouldn't they? I think I'll ask Father Carmody about that this morning."

"Yes, Joe, you see what he says," Mrs. Militello dismissed the whole vague idea. She was far more concerned with her plans for the afternoon. "Say, Rita, are you gonna call Josephine like I said and tell her you can't work this after?"

"Can't I just get off early?" Rita asked. "I hate to miss a week there. Gee, the things them ritzy-looking women talk about while I do their nails!"

"Well, then, ask to get off at four, so you can have supper started before I get home."

In Mrs. Militello's youth, nice Italian girls had been kept strictly at home and educated only in the household arts until it was time to marry the man of their father's choice. Thus, despite her husband's position, the social world beyond her own family and parish was to

her still so strange and difficult — glimpsed only through the parents' organizations which she felt it her duty to join — that this afternoon would be in the nature of a venture into the unknown; one, indeed, she would never have undertaken but for her desire to accommodate Mrs. Straubmeyer, who had always been so nice to her.

The rows of card tables in the ballroom of Hotel Lakeport were just beginning to fill when she entered, for she had taken literally the hour designated on the ticket. But even by the time Irma and Loretta arrived, Caroline had not yet put in her appearance.

"I'm so glad to see you again, Mrs. Militello," said Loretta cordially. "Joe is such a grand boy. I understand he and my Pat are taking in the St. Ignatius football rally tonight."

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Hartman." Mrs. Militello smiled, relieved now of all her fears concerning the mayor's wife. "He always tells me what a fine girl Patricia is."

As they waited and waited, Mrs. Militello grew rather worried about the elegant Mrs. Murray; and Irma was frankly impatient, though Loretta's good humor was unimpaired. Then, some twenty minutes after most of the tables had started playing, Mrs. R. Emmett Murray made her entrance. One of her most dazzling smiles lit her firm, decisive features as, with many a gracious nod to left and right, she made her way toward her table, trailing a faint aura of "Wood Violet" scent, and looking as svelte and regal as only she could. Glittering pince-nez, turquoise earrings, and a large white corsage of baby chrysanthemums, all high-lighted her usual study in blue. Her one regret was that she had not stood by her preference for large hats, when she

saw that everyone else also seemed to be wearing those small, off-the-face velvet turbans that were so popular this fall, bunched high in front like a southern mammy's. Every one, that is, except Mrs. Militello. She might at least get some new cherries for that millinery horror, thought Caroline.

Only the necessity of being seen by her public had lured Caroline into an afternoon of bridge. These large Saturday affairs always drew the rank and file of Catholic society—the office workers, teachers, and others eager for a glimpse of those one step above them—wives like Irma, of businessmen, or, like Loretta, of politicians, or, like Caroline herself, of professional men; these were the only women with leisure enough to spend all week in such pursuits. Yes, the whole thing at best would have been tiresome enough, thought Caroline, but then, when the fourth at the table could not come, to have Irma ask Mrs. Militello! What ever possessed Irma to do such things?

Despite her lack of interest in cards, Caroline took care to play unusually well today, except every third hand, when the pivot system made Mrs. Militello her partner. It irked her to see the wife of the mayor, even of the retiring mayor, treating a woman of the Militello sort just like an equal. After all, she was not the type of wife who could be politically influential. In Loretta's place, never would Caroline be guilty of such poor taste.

"My, such pretty cards!" Mrs. Militello admired the cellophaned double deck which was the prize for the table. "If I'm lucky today, maybe I win them!"

"I hope you do," laughed Loretta. "I've won enough of them in my time to open a gambling joint."

When, in an intermission midway through the afternoon, the fashion show came on, Pat Hartman, of course, was among the Stella Maris freshmen modeling the new fall styles — those for street wear shorter than any since the Twenties, as Irma observed. When Pat was called over by Loretta to meet Mrs. Militello, her air of distant politeness toward the mother of her current boy friend struck just the right note, in Caroline's opinion. It was never necessary to be rude to put people in their place.

Since there was no set time for the playing to end, Caroline waited for a moment when her score was well ahead to suggest that they stop. Satisfied that she had won, when Irma totaled the scores, Caroline felt that she could afford to be generous.

"I'm sure you must have more use for these than I have, Mrs. Militello," she said, handing the prize cards to the woman.

"Oh, thank you," smiled Mrs. Militello. "You sure you don't want them?"

"Quite," said Caroline modestly. "I'm afraid I don't have as much time to play cards as most people."

"I think I might as well stay downtown for dinner," Irma announced, when the four women had passed into the thronged lobby. "Then I can go right over to the novena at St. Ignatius. Anyone want to join me?"

"Oh, is that the service Russell Carmody gives?" asked Loretta. "He was down at WLKP the other night, arranging to have it broadcast, when George was speaking on that forum about the arms embargo. Before I knew it he talked George into putting in an appearance at the St. Ignatius rally tonight — even though we already had the evening planned!"

"Why don't you stay out to dinner with me, Mrs. Militello?" Irma suggested.

Caroline, who had just decided on that course herself, stepped on Irma's foot, as she said with a smile as sweet and cold and firm as a frozen dessert, "Now, Irma, I think we've kept Mrs. Militello away from that wonderful family of hers long enough. It's eleven children you have, isn't it, Mrs. Militello?"

"Seven," said the woman, coloring at the tone, her happy smile of a moment before now strained.

"Oh, yes, of course! How do you ever keep them all straight?" purred Caroline, without waiting for an answer. "Then you're not coming with us, Loretta?"

"Not tonight. George and I have to be at the Chamber of Commerce banquet at eight-thirty."

George might better spend the evening with Bob and Frank, attending a Democratic rally on the east side, Caroline thought.

"I didn't know you intended to stay down, Carrie," said Irma later, as they came out of the hotel into the early autumn twilight. At street corners stony-faced Indian women sat selling bittersweet — always a sign of fall in Lakeport.

"I just thought I might as well start that novena," Caroline explained, "as long as this is only the third night of it."

Not only was she curious about Russell's reputed preaching powers, but she also had a feeling that the opportunity for making the novena should not be neglected. Now that she had done every practical thing possible for Bob's campaign, her restless urge for accomplishment was overflowing into spiritual channels.

"Where shall we eat, Leonardo's?" said Irma. "I love the atmosphere there."

"Heavens, no! I've had enough of sunny Italy for one day!"

The long front windows of the Regency Room, on the second floor of one of Lakeport's most popular restaurants, overlooked Main Street, but the plate glass made rush hour traffic and newsboys' war cries relatively inaudible, so that the panorama seemed as remote as a silent film. Recorded music, soft, unseen, blended into the buzz of conversation.

"Oh, *South of the Border*," Irma exclaimed, identifying the song. "Janet says that's the first piece that's ever had the girl joining the convent. You know, 'in a veil of white, by candlelight, she knelt to pray.'"

"Janet has never thought of joining the convent herself, has she?" asked Caroline, on an off-chance, carefully squeezing a sliver of lemon over her shrimp cocktail.

"Oh, no!" laughed Irma. "She's having too much fun out in the world."

Caroline did not doubt that. To her annoyance, Peter had already asked Janet to next Friday's college dance. Evidently Russell, to borrow one of the boys' expressions, had not got to first base with Peter. In fact, Paul seemed much more impressed by the magnetic personality of the priest.

"I'm glad she does get around," Irma went on. "I wouldn't want her to be like poor Rita Militello. Janet says Rita's not a bad kid, but she's so anxious to make a hit with everyone at once, she just queers things for herself. I don't think she even likes Janet any too well for being more popular."

"What can you expect, with such a mother? I could see how gauche she was that day she interviewed me," Caroline commented. "By the way, I got a copy in the mail this morning, and except for her English, it's really not too bad."

"I know, I saw Janet's copy yesterday. One of us will have to bring it over tomorrow for Mama and Papa Straubmeyer to see."

Caroline was not pleased by the reminder that the bi-weekly dinner with her parents had again rolled around.

"Peter and Paul said something about bringing Janet and Mimi over there after the football game tomorrow, but I told them they'd have more fun eating at some nice restaurant."

"Oh, why, Carrie? Your mother'd love fussing for them."

"That's not the point, Irma. You know Papa and his Victorian prejudices about girls smoking and such things. What would Mimi think of him?"

"What would he think of Mimi?" laughed Irma. "But, at that, he'd probably like to have them, anyway. When you and Bob couldn't come during the summer, sometimes he'd get so grumpy he wouldn't even want to bother keeping the Polish people in the neighborhood lined up for Bob. He said if they judged by appearances, they wouldn't even believe you were his daughter."

"Oh, Papa's so touchy!" Caroline's voice almost trailed off as she caught sight of two late diners, just about to follow the hostess toward a table beyond hers. Yes, the first was Miriam Keith Jordan — dressed, Caroline noted, in something simple and black, becoming rather than fashionable, but casually trailing silver foxes. The other woman, she saw after a moment, was Mrs. Averill Phelps,

though her freshly waved hair was now several shades darker than it had been last summer.

Prepared for at least a brief chat, Caroline, though she suddenly felt a little overdressed, turned on her warmest smile as Miriam approached — only to be passed with the most casual of nods and a “Good evening” that was civil but nothing more.

“Well, can you beat that!” said Irma, who had seen the whole thing. “Passing you right by, when her own daughter goes with Paul! When you think how glad Loretta was to see Mrs. Militello today —”

The thought that she herself might appear to Miriam as Mrs. Militello did to her was too much for Caroline.

“Well, this is an awkward place to stop and talk,” she said at once. “After all, the fact remains Paul is still going with Mimi. He’s taking her to the dance, in fact; she took him to the one that Lakeport Seminary had last night, you know.”

“I’ll bet that wasn’t her mother’s fault,” said Irma, and Caroline knew she was right.

Things would be different in another month, she promised herself. Tuesday, November seventh — yes, just a month from today — would turn the tables. She knew that there was little doubt of Bob’s success against Judge Porter Hale Fenton, the elderly jurist whom the Republicans (also burdened with too many German-named leaders) had nominated chiefly because both his father and his grandfather had been mayors of Lakeport in their day. Their day, though, was gone for good, thought Caroline with satisfaction.

Miriam’s deliberate snub snapped the last of Caroline’s resolve to win over her and her friends by sheer gracious-



ness after the election. Let them win her over now! Though it seemed hardly probable that the royal couple of England would pass through Lakeport again in the next four years, there would be plenty of other British and French celebrities arriving to talk up their side of the war, if the last one was any criterion. Then wouldn't those fine Anglican matrons come running to the mayor's wife to get the inside track! Not until they had thoroughly made up for every slight she had ever suffered would Caroline accept them now, determined to improve on Loretta in this respect, as in so many others.

She tore into her steak as if she were biting off the heads of Lakeport's elite. That Charlotte Phelps, nee Winthrop, for instance! Winthrop, indeed! Her grandfather had been no less German than Caroline's, but after making his fortune selling defective rifles to the Union Army, Jacob Weintraub had changed his name just as easily as he changed his Lutheran church for St. Giles' Episcopal cathedral, attended — on occasion — by all of Lakeport's first families. That was the trouble, thought Caroline. Catholics had to be taken just as they were or not at all. And in Lakeport, the choice was "not at all."

"Yes, I'll certainly start that novena tonight," she said aloud, overcoming even her distaste for the church's location, adjacent to St. Ignatius High School, and thus hard by the Seneca Market, of vulgar memory. Emerging from the restaurant to find the curbs crowded and traffic rerouted from Main Street, Caroline remembered that it was about time for the St. Ignatius pre-rally parade to the college to begin.

"Oh, I'd love to see it," said Irma, in her school-girlish way.

"It forms over at the high school, anyway," said Caroline; so, crossing Main, they walked a block beyond, to the parallel street on which the Jesuit property adjoined one side of the market. It was as much this convenience of the church to downtown as the excellence and variety of its preachers that made all its services so popular even now, after most of the original German parishioners had been driven north by the advance of business.

At the moment the street was much noisier than Main, with the regular Saturday night market crowd swelled by those arriving for the Novena and others engaged in lining up floats and cars for the parade. Trucks sponsored by the various school organizations, decked in green and white bunting, proclaimed in a dozen ways the approaching extinction of the Annunciation Lions by the St. Ignatius Eagles. Seniors ran back and forth shouting directions above the tumult of horns and band music.

It was not until order began to emerge from the chaos and the cars started to follow the floats that Caroline caught sight of the Murray automobile, festooned with crepe paper in the school colors. On one of the trucks a brief-skirted majorette, twirling her baton, led the East Lakeport Drum Corps in a favorite St. Ignatius football song, and all along the line lusty voices took up the derisive chorus:

I'll send my boy to Annuncia-tion,  
Where they'll teach him all they can,  
I'll send my boy to Annuncia-tion,  
And he'll come back a man!  
I'll send my boy to Annuncia-tion,  
Where they'll educate him well,  
I'll send my boy to Annuncia-tion,  
Yes, I will, *I will* — like hell!

Even Mimi was valiantly trying to follow the words, Caroline noticed, as the Murray car passed. Still singing, Paul gave an extra blast of the horn, and Mimi waved a gay greeting to the women. Janet, with Peter in the back seat, playfully tossed them a roll of green serpentine.

Caroline smiled back, carried away by the festive atmosphere. How right she had been to send her boys to St. Ignatius, whose functions were followed with interest by all middle-class Lakeport, instead of to some out-of-town college whence their activities could be reported only indirectly. Just last night Paul's picture had been in the papers again for winning that play-writing contest.

Her pleasure faded a little as she recognized Pat Hartman's sleek convertible, with Joe Militello looking as if he ought to be wearing a chauffeur's uniform to drive it. Worse still, Rita was with them, sitting on the side nearest the curb, shrieking the words of the song. Caroline involuntarily shrank back in distaste as Rita stopped singing long enough to screech, "Hi-ya, Mrs. Murray!"

Caroline saw Pat wince and try to look as if Rita were some total stranger picked up along the way. At times Pat was so like her Uncle Bert — far more so than Mimi, thought Caroline. You could never tell whom children would take after. There was Mimi Jordan, despite her Keith blood, almost as easygoing in her way as her unrecognized aunt, Loretta, while Loretta's own Pat was the one to resemble Bert. Indeed, Caroline reflected, had the two girls been switched in their cradles, Pat would certainly have made a more suitable, if less agreeable, daughter for Miriam.

## Chapter 8

WHEN the parade disbanded after the long ride north on Main Street to the college grounds, there was the usual snake dance on the football field, about a towering bonfire topped by an effigy of the Annunciation Lion. The flames leaping far up into the night sky gave the scene a livid unreality, as hundreds of laughing boys and girls trooped around the blaze, chanting the annually revived words, to the tune of "John Brown's Body":

Old Annunciation is a Lion in its grave . . .  
While Saint Ig's goes marching on!  
Give a cheer for Saint Igna-tius . . .  
As the Eagles march right on!

It was fun at first, but Pat Hartman was glad when the fire began to die down and the crowd surged into the gymnasium, which was gaily decked with St. Ignatius pennants and emblems of every kind. She was glad, too, that Rita had gone off on a mad round of greeting acquaintances with her familiar "So hello!" and "Hi-ya, toots!" Rita was not the type who was asked out often, Pat gathered, but when she was, she wanted everyone to know she was there.

When all the seats were filled, the school band struck up the Alma Mater, and the audience stood up. The few boys who wore hats removed them, as the priests did their birettas. Hardly anyone knew the words of the verse,

but even the girls and the people from the neighborhood who turned out on such occasions joined in the familiar chorus:

Then gather round and swell the sound,  
Our hearts with ardor light,  
Unfurl our banners bright,  
The royal green and white!  
With ringing cheer for Alma dear,  
Our loyalty renew.  
Saint Ignatius, to you  
Our hearts will be true!

On the stage that had only yesterday served as an altar, a prominent senior was now introducing President O'Shea. When he had said his few amiable words about tomorrow's game, a cheer leader came on, energetically leading the roar of:

Goodness! Gracious! Saint Ignatius!  
Be-e-e-e-e-e-e-eat AnnunciATION!

The dean of the college spoke next, but Pat hardly listened, knowing that they would all say much the same thing. With a tiny, long-quilled hat on the back of her page-boy bob, Pat, in her plaid jacket, tweed skirt, and saddle shoes, looked as pert and gay as a college girl could, but even as she made bright conversation with Joe, her eyes were scanning the crowd to locate the Murrays. It pained her more than anyone knew to see Paul with Mimi, yet some impulse left her unsatisfied until she had found them.

Of course, Joe was a good kid and cute enough in his Latin way, but Paul! The glimpse of his profile, a little more perfect even than Peter's, caused Pat an almost

physical pang. For this, she had given up her plans to go to college out of town! Last spring, the prospect of a freshman year at Stella Maris, with Paul at St. Ignatius, had seemed ideal; when she found out otherwise, it was too late to register anywhere else. How could you know a fellow was a selfish heel and still feel this way? she wondered hopelessly.

Monsignor Straubmeyer, as one of the oldest living alumni, was talking now, in his benevolent way, of the traditional rivalry between St. Ignatius and Annunciation, but Pat's feeling for the college was hardly strong enough to give interest to what she already knew.

What has Mimi got that I haven't got? she asked herself. That *dumb* Mimi! She was as helpless as a kitten with its eyes not yet open. Last year Paul had been glad enough to go to all the senior affairs at the Sem. This year, though, he would move in a circle where "the Sem" meant Lakeport Sem, where St. Charles' parish mattered no more than St. Henry's, and Stella Maris was just another denominational college.

That was what made the difference, she realized bitterly. Mimi, her own first cousin, her inferior in brains and personality, lived in an entirely different world. Even if her Uncle Bert was never mentioned in the family, he had known what he was doing when he married a Keith.

Pat recognized Father Carmody when he slipped in at a side entrance close to the stage, for he had given the retreat at Stella Maris this year — one not easily forgotten. All agreed that they had never had such a "simply smooth" retreat master.

The senior acting as master of ceremonies was soon drowned out by cheers and calls for Father Carmody, as

the irresponsible freshmen saw their favorite priest. Laughing, he walked up to the stage.

"I don't know what I'm doing here," he said, smiling with engaging candor. "When I went to college here, I couldn't even make the scrub team. Even now I can barely tell a forward pass from a lateral! All I know is that our team can't lose tomorrow if it has half as much school spirit as our class of '43!"

His lightness of touch made the previous speakers seem a dreary lot indeed. Renewed cheers broke out.

"But you don't want to listen to me."

He ignored the clamorous protest of his audience.

"So as a special surprise for you, in a very few minutes you'll meet one of our most famous and successful alumni. Ah, here he comes now!" He held up his hands in imitation of a cheer leader. "Let's give a cheer, boys, for Mayor George Hartman, St. Ignatius class of 1915!"

Properly distinguished in his evening clothes, the mayor walked down the aisle amid enthusiastic applause. In a few more months, thought Pat sadly, there would be no more of that; her father would be just another lawyer again. Her mother actually seemed glad of the fact, but Pat had thoroughly enjoyed the official prestige. Movies about heiresses who ran away incognito to find someone who loved them for themselves alone always made her laugh at the wrong moments. Not that she lacked confidence in her personal charm; but other advantages like living in St. Charles' parish, attending the Sem, and being the mayor's daughter were certainly all to the good in the young Catholic social whirl.

Yet what had it all really brought her? With none of those attractions, Janet Straubmeyer had kept the boy

she wanted. Pat had some things in common with both her cousins, she realized, and still she was not as happy as either. Torn between two opposite sets of values, she could neither be a carefree Catholic schoolgirl like Janet nor a genuine society bud like Mimi.

Perhaps if she had not been the mayor's daughter, though, Paul might never have taken up with her at all. Soon, their positions would probably be reversed, and as the mayor's son, he would be pursued by girls as she had been by boys — only he would never let himself become involved with anyone in particular, as she had with him. By that time, she would be a nobody, comparatively. But a Sem girl's manner must be no less casually correct than her appearance. Not even other Sem girls would guess if Joe Militello or whoever else happened to ask her out was not just the boy she had wanted most.

Her father's jovial little speech, with its adroit plug for the Democratic cause, was finished now, and he and Father Carmody came down from the stage together, chatting cordially even while acknowledging the applause. The priest then made his way over toward the Murray twins, while the mayor hurried down the aisle toward the door. Pat waved to attract his attention; she might as well show him off while she could.

"Smooth speech, Dad," she said when he came over.

"Thanks, Pat. You kids having a good time?"

"But def!" she assured him.

"Fine! Say, that Father Carmody is certainly a regular fellow, isn't he, Joe? I clean forgot to reserve a ticket for the game tomorrow, but he told me I could sit with him in the faculty section, right on the fifty-yard line.



I asked him over to dinner after. Well, your mother's waiting out in the car, Pat, and we're late for the C. of C. banquet already. Enjoy yourselves, kids."

"Everyone likes Father Carmody," said Joe proudly, as the mayor left. "He's certainly tops. Just for doing some extra work for him this morning, he's invited me to the Lakeport Philharmonic concert with him Monday. It's the first one of the season."

"Yes, I know. Mother and Dad always have to go." Pat took out a cigarette. "And I've been asked to usher there."

"I don't know how he gets time for all he does." Joe held the match for her. "This morning he had me addressing cards for the first meeting of the parents. That's his latest idea — his and Mrs. Murray's."

"Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, I presume?" Pat's tone was mocking.

"That's right. She's certainly some society leader, isn't she?"

"Yes — if you mean Catholic society." Pat exhaled smoke.

"Catholic society?" The distinction was apparently new to Joe. "Aren't you splitting hairs?"

"They've been split for me," said Pat grimly, though she knew Joe would not understand. The band was playing now, so everyone was talking at once; she hoped Joe would not bring her over to visit with Father Carmody and the Murrays. Just then, to her surprise, she saw Mimi approaching with a friendly smile.

"Hello, you two," Mimi greeted them. "Pat, you're just the one I'm looking for! I've just sprung the most awful run, and neither Janet nor I have a drop of nail polish

with us! Look, isn't that ghastly?" She held out one shapely leg.

"That's what you get for boycotting Japan," said Pat, but Mimi looked blank. How like her to come over for something like that just because she knew no one else present, thought Pat, but, concealing her annoyance behind a smile, she fumbled in her bag. "I think I have some polish here somewhere, if I can just find it. You'll pardon us if we let our hair down, Joe. This is an emergency!"

"That's all right," Joe laughed. "I think I'll run over and say hello to Father Carmody while you two are repairing the damage."

A hulking, inarticulate halfback held the stage as the girls made their way toward the improvised powder room, which was almost empty now that the rally had begun, though the air was still blue with smoke. Pat ground her cigarette in an ash tray and carefully touched up her lipstick before the mirror, while behind her Mimi dabbed at her stocking with the polish.

"Smooth rally, isn't it?" said Pat, to make conversation.

"Oh, slick!" Mimi agreed. Then she frowned slightly with the effort to express a more subtle idea than usual. "All this is so new to me. You know, sometimes I think you Catholic kids must get more out of your schools. You all seem to know just where you're heading and how everything fits in."

"You've got something there," Pat admitted, though she had often been irked by the limitations of the Catholic education upon which her parents insisted.

"Like Paul," Mimi went on. "Last night at our dinner dance when they served meat, he was simply livid! He

made them take it right back. Not many boys would do a thing like that."

"Practically none," said Pat. Trust Paul, instead of quietly leaving the meat, to make such an issue of it that everyone for tables around knew what a fine, upstanding Catholic boy Paul Murray was! If he could manage it, all St. Ignatius would soon hear of this new martyrdom of St. Paul, Pat guessed.

"Ready?" Mimi looked at Pat in the glass.

"Just about," Pat gathered up her purse, after a final approving glance in the mirror. As they turned to leave, Rita burst into the room.

"Gee whiz, Pat!" she cried, "I been lookin' all over for you. I wanted you to hear Nick speak."

"Oh, was that who was speaking?" Pat looked superior, determined to show Mimi that the loud-mouthed Italian girl was no more than a tolerated acquaintance. But the chill was lost on Rita, who ignored Mimi and leaned confidentially toward Pat.

"Say, that reminds me, I meant to tell you somethin' Nick told me last night —"

"Can't it wait?" Pat made ready to leave. "I'm sure it can't be so important."

"Oh, you'll want to hear it all right!" Rita grinned knowingly. "It's about them cute Murray twins that you used to go with one."

Both Pat and Rita looked interested at the mention of the Murrays, and as Rita sauntered over to the mirror chewing her gum with elaborate nonchalance, Pat turned around.

"Why, what was it, Rita?" she asked in a friendlier tone.

"Well, Nick says there's somethin' awful funny about those Murray twins!" Rita added color to her already over-rouged cheeks.

Pat shrugged. "Just some football player's opinion!"

"Wait a minute, you don't get it!" Rita announced, unwilling to lose her audience. "It's not Nick's idea. He heard it from a priest at St. Ignatius."

"Heard what, Rita?" Pat snapped.

"Well, it's sort of hard to explain," Rita admitted. "But Nick says the Murray twins have got some kind of fixation with each other!" The very unfamiliarity of the word seemed to fascinate her. "You know what a fixation is."

"Do you?" said Pat. "I think you're getting a little beyond your depth, Rita." She glanced at Mimi, who stood aside, regarding Rita with amused incomprehension; she had obviously never seen anyone like her at close range in all her life. Pat had no idea where this tale of Rita's was leading, but she felt a strong desire to let Mimi hear the worst, whatever it was. Anything to break through that blind, smug look of hers! Aloud Pat said, "What else did Nick tell you, Rita?"

"Well, ain't that enough?" Rita demanded. "Like I said, he says they've got this fixation, so they're all wrapped up in each other instead of anyone else."

At this Mimi could not suppress a giggle, though Rita cast her a deadly look. Pat suddenly hated them both, but rather than defend the Murrays as she might have under ordinary circumstances, she merely raised her eyebrows and purred, "Well, you never can tell, can you?"

Having broken her news, Rita jerked her head toward Mimi with a look that plainly asked "Who's your friend?" so that Pat could no longer avoid introducing them.

"Oh, I forgot you two don't know each other. Mimi, this is Rita Militello, Joe's little sister. My cousin Mimi Jordan, Rita."

Mimi had obviously quite forgotten Rita's remarks when they emerged from the powder room.

"Your polish was a lifesaver, Pat," she smiled in farewell. "I'll see you around!"

"Yes, if you spring any more runs, just let me know," said Pat.

"Gee, your cousin looks ritzy," Rita observed chummily. "Who's she go with?"

"If you must know, dear, she goes with Paul Murray."

"Oh, my God!" Rita almost swallowed her gum. "Why didn't you say somethin'?"

"How could I? But don't lose any sleep over it. I'm sure she paid even less attention than I did to whatever you were driving at about the twins."

"Yeah? That's good. Just the same, though — Oh, here comes Nick now. I'll see you later."

As she made her way back to Joe, past all the gay, laughing faces, Pat bit her lip in helpless chagrin. She had tried to score an indirect hit against Mimi and missed, but even if she had succeeded, what difference would it make now? Mimi had Paul, and nothing Pat or Rita Militello said was going to change that. With difficulty, Pat summoned up a smile for Joe, who jumped to his feet at her approach.

"Oh, say, Pat," he gulped, awe struck by the smile, "I've been meaning to ask you. Could you — I mean, would you like to go to our dance with me next Friday? If you haven't already got a date, that is."

She had been wondering what was delaying him. There

was nothing exclusive about St. Ignatius dances as such. Not only girls still in the academies but any little stenographer or shopgirl who wanted to feel in the collegiate swim for one night could come if her boy friend could buy a ticket. At Stella Maris, however, it was a point of honor — especially among the Sem girls, who naturally led the whole school — not only to make every dance of the season, but to make all with leading St. Ignatius men. For weeks beforehand the girls rushed around asking each other, "Are you going to the St. Ignatius dance?" solely in order to announce, "Oh, yes, I'll be there. They *are* getting to be perfect brawls, but Johnny's on the Student Council, you know, so we have to show up . . ."

"This coming Friday?" Pat echoed, as if taken wholly by surprise. "Let's see now, Well — yes, Joe, I think I could make that all right."

Despite her unhappiness over Paul, Pat was so relieved by Joe's invitation that she listened almost with interest as the St. Ignatius coach, last and least optimistic of the speakers, finished his talk. Yes, Joe was certainly a comfort. She could still get other boys — boys with cars, with nicer clothes and a smoother line, but Paul had cured her of the glib, breezy type that most of her friends preferred. After him she appreciated, or at least tried to make herself appreciate, the value of simple sincerity like Joe's.

Now the band blared out the Notre Dame *Victory March*, and the crowd, in a thoroughly hilarious mood by this time, gaily roared the irreverent parody more familiar to most than the original words. Even Pat sang with them:

Beer, beer for old Notre Dame,  
Shake up the cocktails, let's start the game.  
Send the freshmen for more gin,

Don't let a sober sophomore in!  
Though we may stagger, we never fall,  
We sober up on wood alcohol.  
We'll have fun and no harm done,  
For the glory of Notre Dame!

"The Printers' Mass at St. Ignatius Church starts at one, doesn't it?" Pat suggested, as the crowd slowly edged out of the gymnasium. "If we went down there now, we wouldn't have to get up in the morning."

"Oh, I would, anyway," said Joe. "It's Holy Name Sunday, you know, and Monsignor Straubmeyer's going to speak at our breakfast."

"Never mind, then," said Pat. "As long as you have to fast, we needn't bother going anywhere to eat now either. It'd be after midnight by the time we got any place. I can go to noon Mass at St. Charles' tomorrow. I wish I had something different to wear, though!"

Pat was just as well pleased that Joe could not afford to take her to the game Sunday, for the interest she showed on such occasions was largely a matter of policy. St. Ignatius, after all, was definitely small time in the football world. So while her mother was attending an IFCA tea run by Mrs. Murray, Pat spent the afternoon in schoolwork, her latest Glenn Miller records, and calls to girl friends about the cocktail party she had decided to hold before the dance.

Her guest list was quite large, for she owed many invitations, but somehow she could not bring herself to include the Murrays. She regretted having to omit Peter and Janet, but asking them would inevitably entail entertaining Paul and Mimi as well — and that, thought Pat, would really be more than she could stand.

Only when the football game was over did she turn on the radio to hear the final score. Annunciation had won, she gathered, so she prepared to be properly sympathetic at dinner. The defeat — largely due, it seemed, to a fumble by Rita's friend Nick — served as conversation throughout the meal, though Father Carmody's amusing anecdotes of the thick-witted players in his classes kept Pat's father from indulging in too much post-mortem strategy.

"Was Janet at the game?" asked Pat, looking very much the schoolgirl today in her rose-colored sweater and skirt, with harlequin reading glasses adding piquancy to her face. The question seemed a fairly roundabout way of finding out what she wanted to know.

"Oh, yes!" said Father Carmody. "She and Mimi Jordan were with the Murray twins, as usual. They were going out to dinner afterward. What a gay foursome they make! I'm so glad to see both those boys getting around socially like that."

"Don't think that's anything new, Father," laughed Pat's mother. "They've been popular since they were in rompers — especially Paul. You can ask our Pat here about that."

"Oh, yes," said Pat casually, wishing her mother were not quite so willing to talk about anything with anyone. "I used to go with Paul in high school. Before I knew Joe very well."

"Anyway, it's a good sign," said Father Carmody, "though I notice that even with girls they never go out separately."

"Yes, they've always been very close," Pat's father put in.



"Almost too close for their own good at times," the priest observed. "It tends to destroy their individuality. People think of either one not as Peter or Paul, but only as half of the Murray twins, if you know what I mean."

"Well, isn't that perfectly natural?" asked Pat's mother.

"Oh, of course. I'd just like to see both of them get their due. As it is, I'm afraid Peter is always overshadowed by Paul."

Pat wondered if Father Carmody could be the priest from whom Nick Antonucci had picked up his distorted idea about the twins. It would be just like that big hulk to read his own stupid meaning into words spoken on an entirely different level.

"Too bad you have to leave us so soon, Father," said Pat's father cordially as they came out of the dining room after dinner.

"Yes, seven is an unearthly hour for a novena to begin," laughed the priest, "but duty calls."

"One of us can give you a lift down, Father," Pat's mother suggested.

"I will," Pat volunteered. It seemed a good chance to clear up what, if anything, lay behind this strange talk about the Murray twins.

"Good girl, Pat!" said Father Carmody. "You know, I'll never forgive Joe for not bringing you over to see me at the rally last night. I thought I remembered you from Stella Maris."

"Maybe we were waiting for you to come to us," Pat suggested archly, as she went to get her coat.

As she drove down Main Street, Pat became aware that Father Carmody was as willing to talk about the Murrys as she was.

"Well, so you used to go with Paul Murray?" he remarked.

"My past is catching up with me," said Pat lightly. "Yes, Paul was quite the glamour boy of the Sodality Conference last year, when I was prefect at the Sem, so it seemed like a good idea at the time."

"I see. And how did you like Peter? He's really the one I'd like to know more about."

"To tell the truth, Father, I've never got to know him very well. Boys who go with Mount girls don't usually like Sem girls and vice versa, you know. I should think Janet could tell you more about Peter than anyone."

"Perhaps she could, but as a matter of fact I very seldom see the Straubmeyers. I suppose it's only natural for Irma not to care about keeping in touch with her first husband's family when she's so much happier with her second. So even though Janet's my own niece, I don't know her as well as you might think."

"Well, all I know is that she and Peter always go everywhere together. He seems like a very nice kid, a little on the shy side. Maybe just overshadowed by Paul, as you said at dinner."

"That's what I'm trying to find out," said the priest. "Just what there is to that relationship and whether it's really the best thing for the two of them."

"Then maybe I ought to tell you, Father. Last night I heard someone else talking about the twins that way, too — about their being too devoted and so on. Just how much is there to that?"

"Nothing at all, Pat, but what I've told you. I had no idea anyone else had even noticed it. What was it you heard?"

"Only that the twins are too wrapped up in each other for their own good. But the way I heard it, there was such a leer attached it made it sound like something right out of *The Children's Hour*."

"Good Heavens, Pat, how silly! Who could have got such an idea?"

"A very silly girl, Father. I'd better not tell you who. But since then I've been thinking. That kind of talk is really playing with fire, isn't it? You can't tell where it might lead."

"Oh, I don't think we need worry about it coming to anything serious, Pat," said the priest. "In that play you mentioned, as I recall, the slander was at least potentially true of one of the victims, whereas with Peter and Paul there's no foundation at all."

"Yes, of course, Father. I should have known that myself."

Nevertheless, Pat's mind was still not completely at rest. When her momentary bitterness of last night had passed, she was troubled by the feeling that she should have squelched Rita Militello much more vigorously than she had. The very fact that Father Carmody had found anything to wonder about in the twins' relationship convinced Pat that it was no subject for Rita's idle chatter. Yes, Rita must be silenced, for if her twisted version spread, Pat would feel morally obliged to invite the twins to her cocktail party, if only to show her loyalty to them. So as much for the sake of her own plans as for the Murrys, she decided to stop Rita, who, she remembered, was attending Father Carmody's novena.

"Are you staying for the services, Pat?" the priest asked, when they had reached the church.

"Yes, I think I will," she said politely, glad of the opportunity to encounter Rita. "Can I drop you anywhere afterward, Father?"

"No, thanks, Pat, I can take a streetcar out to the college."

Inside, where the pews were rapidly filling with the Novena crowd, mostly women, Pat took a seat near the back. There was something comforting in the dim, old-fashioned richness of the church, Pat felt — far more than in the severe, if liturgically correct, modernism in which St. Charles' was being restyled. Father Carmody was just coming out on the altar, when among the last-minute arrivals Pat noticed her Aunt Irma hurrying up the aisle, followed at a more dignified pace by Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, distinguished from the rest as usual with a white cluster of baby mums on her coat lapel — probably the same ones she had worn at the card party yesterday and at noon Mass today, Pat guessed.

Mrs. Murray followed her corsage up the aisle, she thought in amusement. Really, that woman would wear flowers to the Last Judgment! Thoughts of Mrs. Murray drifted through Pat's mind along with the opening prayers. In fact, she scarcely realized that the Litany of the Blessed Virgin was being said until she heard the title "Mother inviolate." That always penetrated, because in her childhood it had made her picture the Blessed Mother all "in violet." Like Mrs. Murray and her inevitable blue, she thought now.

"Mother undefiled," came the priest's voice.

"Pray for us," Pat responded automatically.

"Mother most amiable." Mrs. Murray was one of her mother's oldest friends, Pat knew.

"Pray for us," murmured the congregation.

"Mother most admirable." And she was always nice enough to Pat.

"Pray for us."

"Mother of good counsel." But Pat had never liked her.

"Pray for us."

"Mother of our Creator." Not even when she was going with Paul.

"Pray for us."

"Mother of our Redeemer." Everyone else seemed to like her.

"Pray for us."

"Mother of our Saviour." Maybe they were afraid not to.

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most prudent." All that Catholic stuff impressed them so.

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most venerable." But Pat bet she was no saint.

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most renowned." Just an exhibitionist at heart.

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most powerful." Was she content as a "Catholic society" leader?

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most merciful." Or did she hope to be a Catholic "society leader?"

"Pray for us."

"Virgin most faithful." Staying at Sunrise Point was typical.

"Pray for us."

"Mirror of justice." That was how Paul met Mimi. . . .

"Seat of wisdom." Pat bet Mrs. R. Emmet helped *that* along!

By now Pat no longer even heard her own responses, lost as she was in thoughts of the Murrays, especially in the light of what Father Carmody had told her. She was almost sure that he must be the priest whom Rita had quoted as her source, but there was no point in telling him how his innocent remarks had been perverted. The thing to do was simply to shut Rita up before her story got any further.

When the prayer of St. Bernard and the Novena prayer itself had been given, with its momentary pause while all silently made their special petitions, Father Carmody's discourse began. So effective was he that even Pat could not help listening. Taking his text from the Gospel of the day, "Many are called but few are chosen," he went on to distinguish between those who neglected the spiritual opportunities afforded them as Catholics and those who embraced them. It was not so much the familiar moral as the vividness of his language that held the congregation, Pat decided. The priest also warned against expecting the Novena to guarantee the specific favors requested; God's inscrutable plan always came first. That was wise, Pat thought, remembering that the realistic football coach was the only one whose words at the rally did not seem foolish now.

While the hymn *Mother Dear, O Pray For Me* was sung, Father Carmody knelt at the altar; one acolyte went for the benediction cope and the other lit the candles. It was then that Pat saw Rita Militello scurrying down a side aisle. Quietly she slipped from her seat and out into the vestibule, there to let Rita find her. Association with

Joe had to some extent overcome her condescension toward Italians in general, but that could never bridge the gap between a true Sem girl and a Mount girl such as Rita. Even under the circumstances, Pat was somewhat startled to feel her elbow suddenly clutched as a familiar voice hissed in her ear, "Say, where do you think you're goin'?" Rita's friendliest grin was met with a smile that held just the proper shade of reserve.

"I didn't know you were makin' this Novena," said Rita, as they emerged from the church.

"I'm not," Pat explained. "Father Carmody was at our house for dinner, and I drove him down here, that's all."

"Gee, he's a doll, ain't he?" Rita gushed. "And boy, what a speaker!"

"Yes, I knew he'd be good. He gave our retreat at Stella Maris this year."

"He did? Gee, at the Mount we thought we were lucky to get Monsignor Straubmeyer."

"Maybe you'll have Father Carmody if you come to Stella next year," Pat suggested politely.

"Me? Fat chance!" Rita laughed. "With so many boys to educate in our family, us girls are lucky to get through the Mount. I should worry, though! I work in Henderson's beauty salon Saturdays like I told you, so maybe next year I can get in one of their other departments, permanent."

"That would be nice," said Pat, appalled at such a prospect. At Stella Maris it was considered quite smart, even among the Sem girls, to clerk in a downtown store during the holidays, just as the St. Ignatius boys worked in the post office, but a career as a shopgirl — unless in one's own "shoppe" — was unthinkable.

"I hear you're goin' to the dance next Friday," Rita

chattered on. "Lucky you! Nick can't break training. What a pain in the neck! But we had a fight last night, anyway. We fight somethin' awful! He said all Democrats were crooks and I said they were not. I said he was crazy."

"Do you always fight about politics?" asked Pat, immensely relieved that she would not have to include Rita in her cocktail party. She was waiting for Rita herself to revert to the Murrays, lest bringing up the subject should give it added importance in her eyes.

"No, it's like this," Rita went on. "Nick's pretty sore at the city cause when his family went on relief they had to sell their house and everything, so he sort of blames whoever's in, I guess, your dad and Dr. Murray and everyone. What started us off, though, was when I said I still think the Murray twins are cute, no matter what they've done."

"Rita," said Pat firmly, "you really must stop saying such silly things about the Murrays." Obviously, Rita was more ignorant than malicious, but that would not prevent her doing real harm.

"You didn't think it was so silly last night, did you?" Rita countered, evidently resenting the warning tone.

"I was thinking about something else then," said Pat. "Since then I've realized your line of talk may not only be silly but really bad — worse than you know."

"You mean there's more to it?" Rita's beady eyes glittered. "What did you hear?"

"Nothing!" Pat could not keep the exasperation out of her voice.

"Well, gee, you needn't take it out on me," Rita protested.

"Look, Rita." Pat achieved a patient, big-sisterly tone.



"Haven't you got anything better to do than run around repeating a lot of nonsense some jealous football player dreamed up about the Murrays?"

"You seem awful anxious to help them out," Rita observed, with feminine malice now. "It wouldn't be that you're still stuck on the one you used to go with, would it?"

"No, it wouldn't!" Pat flushed angrily. "I just don't happen to like false rumors spread about my friends!"

"Gee, wouldn't my brother Joe be surprised to see you all hot and bothered about the Murrays!" Rita followed up her advantage. "Looks to me like you must know a lot more than you're tellin'."

"If I do, at least I have the sense to keep my mouth shut! And I think it's about time you learned to do the same!" With that Pat turned and strode toward her car, pounding her spectator pumps sharply into the pavement. Another minute, and she would have slapped that rabbit face! Anything else she could say, she would only regret later, on Joe's account.

As she switched on the dashboard radio, the surging rhythm of *Begin The Beguine* stabbed her with swift memories of last spring, when she had been Paul's proudly escorted date. At the Sem's Easter Monday tea dance, at the St. Ignatius High Senior Prom, at the Adios the night of Paul's graduation — everywhere they had danced to that music, agreeing it would always be their favorite. What song was he crooning in Mimi's ear tonight?

A twist of the dial brought only unctuous commercials or grim-voiced commentators interpreting the day's indecisive war news; so impatiently Pat snapped the radio off. Not until she had driven several blocks did she cool

enough to realize that her words with Rita might well have just the opposite effect from what she had intended. If only the little wretch hadn't made her lose her temper! But at least she had done her Christian duty by the Murrys. In fact, she was quite sick of the whole ridiculous business. At worst no one in his right mind could take seriously anything told by Rita Militello. There were just two things wrong with that utter goon, thought Pat sardonically — everything she said and everything she did.

## Chapter 9

AS RITA Militello walked home, thinking over what Pat had said, she soon became convinced that she had indeed stumbled on something far more serious than she had thought at first. Pat's defense only confirmed her own desire to believe nothing but the best of two such handsome boys as the Murrays, and yet the drama of the situation fascinated her. To think she had it in her power to influence the lives of the glamorous, unapproachable Murray twins! Now that she realized some harm might come of the story Nick had told her, her interest resolved into a strong desire to shield the boys in true heroine fashion — though from what, she had only the vaguest idea.

In an imagination unrestrained by probabilities, she saw herself as their one champion against a hostile city. Later, when somehow Mrs. Murray learned, she would smile graciously and say, "Well, Rita, I only wish all our friends were as loyal as you!" Privately, she would suggest to the twins, "Why don't you take out that lovely little Militello girl? After all, she's done more for us than Janet or Pat or anyone." Or perhaps the twins would not even need such urging. Overcome with gratitude, they would vie with each other — in a nice way, of course — to shower attentions on Rita, who with great difficulty would choose one, perhaps *letting* Janet keep the other. . . .

And yet what could she do for them if there was no

one to protect them against? So far, at Mount Carmel she had heard nothing but the most rapturous sighs over the Murray twins — sighs of envy, sometimes, that Janet had taken her obvious advantage to secure one, but never of despair. There was always the other twin. Since, however, he seemed equally remote from most Mount girls, it was a subject on which all were in understanding agreement rather than rivalry. So if none of the others had heard, Rita speculated, surely it could do no harm to repeat, with proper disapproval, what was being said about the Murrays, in order to prove her own loyalty to them.

For the first time since she had become aware of their magnetic presence in the circle of Catholic schools, Rita would have something to tell her friends about Peter and Paul. This time she would be the one to answer excited questions in the halls of the Mount. "How did you find out, Rita?" "Why, Rita, how well do you know them?" "Oh, Rita, you've been holding out on us! You knew the Murrays all the time!"

As a source of firsthand news about the heroes, Janet was usually the center of a large clique of devoted worshipers. But her matter-of-fact, slightly amused manner of discussing her foster cousins only annoyed the more starry-eyed — just like the ease with which she took in her stride all the offices, honors, and friendships for which Rita worked so furiously. No one could tell Rita that Janet's influential family connections did not prejudice the nuns in her favor; was not Sister Marcella practically her aunt or something? Well, here was one piece of news Janet would not have first!

Excited by the prospect of her day in the Mount lime-

light, Rita decided to take a chance on wearing make-up in class, in defiance of the school ban, instead of merely applying it after school, as most of the girls did. The offense passed unnoticed by Sister M. Anastasia ("Klondike Annie" to her pupils), the nearsighted old nun who taught the seniors English during the first period. But in the Vergil class nothing escaped Sister Marcella.

"Rita Militello, will you please leave the room until you've washed that ridiculous stuff from your face?" The dry indifference of the nun's tone was more humiliating than anger. "I'd hate to tell you what you look like now!"

A barely suppressed giggle ran through the class, whose individual differences seemed emphasized rather than minimized by the maroon serge uniform of Mount Carmel, with its starched collars and cuffs — a uniform on which the nuns insisted so that the poorer girls would never feel outdressed. As Rita stalked from the room, a furious flush added to the disastrous effects of the cosmetics. There was no doubt those Irish nuns had it in for the Italian girls, she told herself bitterly. Janet's pink cheeks might possibly be natural, as she claimed, but for all anyone knew, she might well be using some brand of rouge more expensive than the other girls could afford. But that Janet had a stand-in with everybody!

As she slowly wiped her face to its normal sallow color, Rita concluded that it would really be more satisfactory not to be quite so open in her revelation about the Murray twins. Janet would probably talk her right down in front of everyone or go snitching to Sister Marcella or something. Better just tell the girls she wanted most to impress, binding them neither to repeat the story to Janet nor to reveal who had told them.

The sensation thus created was all she could have wished. Thrilled to be let in on a secret about the Murray twins, Rita's friends egged her on in horrified delight. "Oh, Rita, how awful!" they would cry. "Imagine anyone saying things like that about the Murrays! They're such dolls, aren't they? What did you say that meant? I wonder how much Janet knows. You don't mind if I tell a few of the other kids, do you? Goodness, those poor boys! If there was only something we could do to help them!"

In one form or another, such dramatic news flew quickly through the Mount, half understood but wholly intriguing. The seniors, especially, knowing the Murrays slightly better than the rest, could talk of little else, so that in the lunch period, when Janet joined the others at her regular table in the cafeteria, she could not but notice the sudden silence, followed by such an unnaturally animated burst of conversation that she was at once suspicious. Later, when she finally wormed the truth out of one of her closest friends, she hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. All she could gather was that the whole school was talking about the Murray twins as if they were being seriously maligned everywhere outside the Mount. The general impression of their complete innocence was now colored by curious, groping speculations as to how the rumor started, though even Janet's friend refused to say from whom she had heard it.

Thoughts of Peter usually brought Janet a comfortable glow. Not just the look of his face, flat cheeked and square chinned, nor the eager lift of his eyebrows when he smiled, nor even the lock of fair hair that always fell across his forehead. What gave these little things their charm in Janet's eyes was Peter himself — his straightforwardness,

his unselfishness toward Paul, and above all, his stubborn loyalty to those who had once won his confidence. Even his mother's tacit opposition had never worried Janet much, for she knew that no amount of pressure could change Peter's mind. So now the mere possibility of his being threatened in some way filled her with a tender, helpless anxiety that had to be communicated to someone.

As the only one of her late father's relatives of whom she saw much, Sister Marcella had always been a favorite with Janet, and indeed had unconsciously influenced the girl's desire to attend the Mount. However, for that very reason Janet was careful to avoid any appearance of apple polishing; she left their contacts entirely up to the nun. Today, for instance, Sister Marcella had asked her to come in after school to help with some blackboard work — a request which, under the circumstances, she was only too glad to grant, though often other nuns' demands on her time made her regret that she had ever let them see her facility in drawing and lettering. Now as she printed in yellow chalk the points of interest on the map of the Mediterranean over which the Vergil class would follow the wanderings of Aeneas, Janet found it harder than she had expected to broach the subject which lay so heavily on her mind.

"Oh, Sister," she began. "Can I talk to you a while? About something that's bothering me?"

"Of course, Janet, dear," smiled Sister Marcella. "What seems to be the trouble, a boy problem?"

"Well, in a way," said Janet. "But not the usual way. It's about Peter and Paul."

"Both of them?" Sister Marcella was surprised.

"Yes, Sister. I just heard the weirdest thing about them.

You know even before I started going out with Peter, they were always just like cousins to me, so this really has me worried. Everyone here at the Mount seems to think people are saying that the twins – well, that they're 'too wrapped up in each other' in some funny way. Isn't that strange?"

"Janet! Don't tell me any of our girls believes such a silly thing!"

"Well, I don't know. No one really believes anything bad about them, of course, but all the girls seem to think that everyone else does."

"Goodness, Janet, where could such an idea have originated?"

"That's what I can't find out. No one will tell where they first heard it."

"In a school this size I suppose it would be hard to trace," the nun observed, "especially since we don't like to encourage tattletales. But leave it to me, Janet. I'll try to find out who's back of it. Meanwhile the important thing to do is to stop it before it goes any further."

"Yes, Sister, that's what I've been trying to do."

"It's so completely ridiculous, perhaps the best thing would be to let it collapse of its own weight. At any rate, don't appear to take it seriously. Laugh it off if you hear any more."

"The trouble is, all the girls think they're defending the twins, but each time it's repeated, some doubt is cast. If they keep harping on that idea long enough, they'll begin to say where there's so much smoke there must be fire."

"Let's hope not, Janet." She patted the girl's shoulder. "Don't worry any more about it now. It's just an idle, vicious rumor, and as you say, the less it's mentioned,



the better. So I wouldn't tell anyone else if I were you. Unless something unforeseen comes up, there's no use upsetting your family needlessly."

Sister Marcella herself, however, was considerably upset. That such a morbid rumor should even be known, if not believed, here in the Mount, of all places, where most of the girls knew the twins only by sight! It certainly could not have started here. Where, then? At first the nun dared not let herself think that Father Carmody's words in class could have been the ultimate source, yet until last Friday never had she heard anyone mention, except with praise, the obvious devotion of the Murray twins. And there was that football player. The least she could do was warn Russell so that he could check any such gossip at St. Ignatius, where surely it must be circulating even more commonly than at the Mount.

Before the adolescent psychology class that afternoon, risking the curious glances of the other students, she stopped Father Carmody just outside the classroom.

"Begging off from an assignment, Sister?" He smiled, but then stopped as he saw her serious face.

"I won't keep you a minute, Father Russell, but there's something I've got to tell you, so you can stop anything like it here at St. Ignatius. To make it brief, all the girls at the Mount today were talking about the Murray twins — wondering if their devotion is good for them and so on — as if someone had said it wasn't."

"That's strange, Sister. Doesn't sound very good for the girls."

"Exactly, Father, and I don't like it a bit. They seem to think the twins have been accused of an 'emotional fixation,' so to speak."

"Did they use those words?" Horror dawned in the priest's face. "Good Lord, Sister, you don't think —"

"The words are mine," she assured him. "Still, Friday when you were talking about the twins — it was the Murrays, of course?" Russell nodded dumbly. "I know more than one of the undergraduates recognized them and suspected the worst. You know how some people can find evil in anything. So don't you think you'd better clear that up?"

"I most certainly shall, Sister." Russell's expression was stricken. "Great heavens, you know I never meant to cast any such aspersions on the Murrays. It's fantastic that anyone could even —"

"Well, someone did," she said, "and it's going further all the time. You know what you meant and so do I and probably most of the other graduate students, but you can't tell how it might have sounded to some of those boys, especially if they had any kind of grudge against the Murrays."

"I'll soon put a stop to that," Russell promised. "And I can't tell you how grateful I am you brought it to my attention."

This was the third time such an idea had come to his ears since Saturday, and he could no longer doubt that his lecture of last Friday had indeed been picked up in a way he had never intended. Joe's questions on Saturday morning he had dismissed with a laugh and Pat's doubts last night were almost as easily dispelled, but Sister Marcella's news made Russell realize with deep concern how far the thing had gone.

He was especially appalled now, for since Friday he had learned something that had changed his whole view

of the Murray twins. Saturday night after the rally he had naturally gone over to talk to Monsignor Straubmeyer, his boyhood pastor and lifelong friend, and, just as naturally, their conversation turned to the twins. Russell had confided his bafflement about Peter's vocational intentions, when to his surprise Monsignor said with a smile, "Oh, did Carrie tell you about that, too?"

"Well, yes, she did," Russell admitted, "but that's as much as I've found out so far."

"I wouldn't be surprised if that's all you ever find out." Monsignor shook his head. "I'm afraid Carrie feels that vocation more than Peter does. He's always told me everything, and, believe me, Russell, if he has any ideas like that, he doesn't know it yet himself. Of course, Carrie means well, but like so many good mothers, she's just overanxious."

Russell was no longer even sure that she meant well. What possible reason could she have had to mislead him so? Was it her way of making sure that he would never get to know the twins at all? He would not put such an elaborate plan past her by any means. If so, he had certainly played right into her hands, for he could see now how he himself must have alienated the boys with all his encouraging remarks about the priesthood. No wonder he never saw them apart! They were simply running interference for each other, lest either be trapped alone into one of those vocational chats so boring and embarrassing to students who had no religious intentions. Doubtless they had early dismissed him as a would-be recruiter, trying to make new priests where no inclination existed. There were such priests, Russell knew, but he had certainly never counted himself among them.

Yes, from their viewpoint the Murrays had every reason to withdraw and become a closed corporation to him, since Peter had no such problem as his mother had indicated. The best thing he could do now was to let them strictly alone and not make more of a fool of himself than he already had. Even in the light of this knowledge, he had intended to let his analysis in class stand, since, after all, he had not identified the twins and as a theoretical case the example was still valid. His line of reasoning had been logical enough; its fallacy simply came from the false premise supplied by Caroline. He should have known there was some good selfish reason behind everything she did, he told himself. What the motive was, he could not tell as yet, but there was a growing suspicion in his mind that it had something to do with literally robbing Peter to pay Paul. Now, however, he must certainly retract his statements to the class.

"If you will return to the notes dictated Friday —" he began, "I wish to make a correction. You may delete the half-dozen sentences or so on the subject of an emotional fixation between a pair of twins. In the first place, since then I have acquired additional data which forces me to dismiss the twins altogether as an example for this class. My error simply proves again that psychology is not and never can be an exact science, notwithstanding the efforts of certain modern materialists to make it that. This is a field in which we must always leave room for intangibles. Therefore disregard what I said on Friday." He paused and drew a deep breath.

"Furthermore, it has also been brought to my attention that the meaning of my remarks has been grossly misinterpreted by someone inside or outside of this class. The

majority, I am sure, realized that I meant exactly what I said — that the mutual devotion of these boys, though good in itself, might make them too dependent on each other for free development in later life. Nothing else was implied. The fact that someone in this room apparently used my remarks to slander a pair of innocent boys makes me regret very much that I thought of mentioning them at all. If I hear any more of such disgraceful nonsense, I shall be forced to call in the undergraduates for individual talks, and possibly make this an exclusively graduate course next term.”

That surely ought to scotch any further talk, he thought. There was little use in trying to single out which student had first got the wrong impression, for undoubtedly the thing had spread quickly. Any of a dozen juniors and seniors might be involved, or, for that matter, even some of the gossiping spinster teachers. He himself was really the one to blame, Russell felt, for letting trust in Caroline’s sincerity lead him so far from the truth. He would never forgive himself if his words in any way hurt the two boys he had tried so hard to understand and help.

Still lashing himself inwardly for his thoughtlessness, Father Carmody thrilled his novena congregation that evening with a particularly eloquent discourse on the evils of gossip. Afterward, as appointed, Joe Militello met him in front of the church.

“Gee, I’m awfully sorry, but I couldn’t get the car tonight, Father,” the boy apologized.

“Think nothing of it, Joe,” said Russell, though he was used to being driven on such occasions. “A nice slow walk out to the Music Hall will do us good.”

“I only wish my father could hear this concert tonight,”

Joe exclaimed. "He loves good music, especially opera. We've still got some Caruso records around the house. But he's pretty busy these nights with politics and stuff. There's going to be a big rally over our way Saturday night."

"I had no idea a Deputy Health Commissioner was expected to concern himself with politics," Father Carmody observed.

"Well, it's like this," Joe explained. "Most of the Italian-Americans on the west side sort of look up to my father as a leader, so he doesn't like to see them get a wrong steer. Right now, you know, the Republicans are trying to get the Italian and Polish peoples' support by telling them the Democrats didn't treat them right. As if they'd treat them half as good after election!"

"Oh, yes, didn't I hear Nick Antonucci's trying to sell the rest of the team on that idea?" Russell recalled. "But I don't suppose it will mean much in the long run."

"Not if my father can help it. He expects to be Health Commissioner if Dr. Murray is elected mayor."

"He does? What kind of man is Dr. Murray, by the way? I don't think I've ever met him."

"Oh, he's a peach — sort of quiet, but even nicer than Mrs. Murray, if that's possible."

"It's quite possible," murmured the priest. "Do the twins take after him at all?"

"Well, yeah, I think Pete does, kind of. I don't know about Paul, though."

"Interesting. But tell me, Joe, have you heard any more of that ridiculous rumor about the twins you mentioned Saturday?"

"Not exactly, Father. Today in the locker room I heard

some of the football crowd making cracks, but I couldn't see who, over the lockers. I don't think they meant anything by it, though."

"No matter what they meant, that must stop," said Russell. "I just wish *I* could catch someone in the act of repeating that tale! I only hope it doesn't get back to the twins themselves; they wouldn't know what to make of it."

"I'll do everything I can, Father," Joe promised.

By the time they reached the Music Hall, the lobby was well filled. Limousine after chauffeured limousine glided up to the entrance, disgorging parties of Lakeport socialites, who, lacking an opera, kept up the Diamond Horseshoe tradition at the opening of the concert season. Many stopped at the improvised booth in the center of the lobby, where a smartly gowned matron with a red-white-and-blue badge on her sequined jacket was selling tickets for the "Banquet For Britain," to be held Saturday at the Mayflower Club. This gala benefit affair, Russell gathered from the posters, though sponsored by the most exclusive of Lakeport's few good private clubs, in honor of Sir Neville Boyce-Carewe of the British Embassy staff, was democratically open to the public — at ten dollars a plate. Lakeport society was certainly going all out for the Allies, thought Russell; hardly a day passed without some new relief committee organized or fund-raising function announced.

It was a moment before he recognized the ticket seller as Miriam Jordan. Despite obvious care, the once lovely Miriam was beginning to show the ravages of time, he noted. She wore that bright, animated look one saw on so many women of her age and class, except when, now

and then, the jaded boredom beneath showed through. No wonder it took a war — even someone else's war — to give such people the illusion of usefulness, Russell reflected. And that sort of life was the height of Caroline's ambition!

Inside the hall, all the boxes and the greater part of the orchestra were soon agleam with starched linen and ablaze with family jewels. Mere music lovers, as usual, occupied the rear seats or those in the balconies. Daughters of Philharmonic subscribers hurried up and down aisles as usherettes — among them Pat Hartman, looking trimly correct even in the plain black woolen dress required by such occasions.

"Oh, look, there's the Mayor and Mrs. Hartman," said Joe, when he and Father Carmody were seated in the first balcony.

"So they are," said Russell, watching Pat lead her parents down the aisle below to seats very close to the stage. Loretta looked quite handsome in something dark red. Those who knew anything about music, the priest had heard, always sat further back, to enjoy the full effect of the blended orchestra, but he was in no position to criticize anyone else's musical taste.

Though he possessed enough superficial knowledge of all the arts to impress undergraduates, when necessary, as an advanced intellectual, he was the first to admit that the theater was the only branch for which he felt a deep appreciation. He had bought the tickets for tonight largely because he knew it was something Joe would enjoy. While the boy sat lost in instinctive response to the music, Russell's thoughts, except during the most obviously tuneful passages, were as far away as he suspected were those of



the majority of the audience. He must look up the Hartmans during the intermission, he decided. His connection with George through his late brother Larry's marriage to Irma was certainly tenuous enough now, but George and Loretta seemed more willing to keep it up than Frank and Irma. It had been very nice of them to have him to dinner yesterday. No doubt the non-Catholic gentry would be properly shocked to see their mayor publicly chatting with a Jesuit.

"Why don't you try to find Pat?" he suggested to Joe when the applause for the first half of the program finally died down. "She won't be so busy now."

"Good idea, Father. I'll take her into the bar for a Coke."

One of Joe's nicest qualities was his constant eagerness to please, thought Russell as they walked downstairs. Perhaps that was what appealed to Pat, though at first glance their combination seemed surprising. For Joe's type one would have picked some unassuming little girl from the Mount, but the fact that he preferred Pat had nothing to do with her being the mayor's daughter. Russell hoped she appreciated that.

While Joe went off in search of Pat, the priest made his way across the smoke-filled lobby to join her parents at the first moment they were alone.

"Hello, there," he smiled. "Enjoying the concert?"

"Great stuff," said the mayor noncommittally, flicking ashes from his cigar. "I'm mighty proud Lakeport has such a fine orchestra."

"Me too, but I'll feel cheated if they don't play a Strauss waltz for an encore," laughed Loretta. "That's about my speed. I hope the next mayor's wife knows more about good music than I do."

"That will be our friend Caroline, no doubt?"

"It looks that way, Father," said George, "if we can just keep the Polish and Italian votes in line. We're holding a big rally on the west side Saturday to help things along."

"Caroline will certainly make the most of the position, if anyone will," the priest observed.

"It'll be fun for the boys, too," said Loretta. "I know our Pat has always got a big kick out of all the official hoopla."

"I hope they do enjoy it," said Father Carmody. "They deserve the best."

"Grand kids!" Loretta agreed. "Always have been. But what was that you were saying last night, about them not being so good for each other or something?"

"Nothing," said the priest firmly. "I merely meant their devotion might be too much of a good thing for them in some ways. I shouldn't even have said that much. Unfortunately, the idea seems to have been misinterpreted already in some quarters."

"No kidding! Not in Republican headquarters, I hope," said George. "At this stage of the game they'd just as soon make out the whole Murray family as psychopathic cases if they thought it would get any votes for Fenton."

"Oh, but who'd pay any attention to such a thing, anyway?" Loretta scoffed. She turned as an usherette came to tell her that the lady in the Banquet For Britain booth would like to see her. Although on her arrival she had noticed Miriam, she could not have been more surprised now by a sudden note from the Queen of England.

"Oh, there you are, Mrs. Hartman!" Miriam was all smiles. She had always called her "Mrs. Hartman," even while Bert was alive, Loretta remembered, for she had never learned to accept her husband's plebeian family.

"Yes, here I am," said Loretta coldly. "What can I do for you now? I thought you had that Englishman all sewed up for your banquet."

"Oh, we have!" Miriam laughed lightly. "We do hope you and the Mayor will be able to attend, though. You received two tickets through the mail, did you not?"

"We did, but you'll receive them right back again tomorrow." Loretta no longer even bothered being polite to her sister-in-law, whom she had come to despise thoroughly. "My husband has to speak somewhere else that night. So if that's all you wanted to know —"

"Oh, but it's not." Miriam lowered her voice. "There's something I must ask you. You're the only one I know who could possibly help me."

"That's about what I thought," said Loretta.

"I realize I have no right to ask the least favor of you." Miriam's tone was almost humble, for her. "But perhaps you'll do this much for Mimi; she's the one most concerned. Without wasting any more of your time, Mrs. Hartman, will you tell me frankly, is there anything — well, strange about the Murray twins' relationship? Any sort of excessive attachment between them?"

"Certainly not!" snapped Loretta. "Where did you ever get such an idea?"

"As a matter of fact, a friend of mine heard something like that and told me. Then, when I questioned Mimi and found that she had heard something along the same line, I felt I had to talk to someone who knew them well."

"Well, take it from me, it's a lot of foolish talk! You'd have a hard time finding two boys as nice and clean cut as Peter and Paul. Anyone who's ever met them ought to be able to see that with half an eye!"

"There has been talk, then?"

"I suppose you might call it that. Lord knows how it started!" Loretta's Irish blood was boiling. "But the whole thing's nothing but plain utter foolishness, that's all! Mimi's in a lot safer company with nice Catholic boys like the Murrays than with some of those young society loungers — and you know it!"

The truth of that statement did not make it any more agreeable to Miriam. She had not for one moment believed the story about the Murrays; she had simply wanted to find out if it was even known on their own level of society. They seemed quite gentlemanly boys, for their background; but that background was one of which Miriam could never approve. From the first she had discouraged Mimi's attraction to Paul Murray, simply because the less Mimi had to do with Catholics, the better her mother liked it. She herself had been a fool ever to marry a Catholic, Miriam was convinced, determined to save her daughter from any possibility of making the same mistake.

Indeed, it had been largely for the sake of future children that the Keiths had insisted on Bert's turning Episcopalian, so if by any chance Mimi should develop Romanist leanings, all the bitterness, the mutual recriminations that had wrecked her parents' marriage from the start would have been suffered in vain. Her whole life was a retribution for that one foolish move, Miriam often thought. Those years in Europe, an escape at the time, had brought no lasting satisfaction. Once it was known that the same event which left her free to marry also left her fortune considerably depleted, the interest of her titled admirers became remarkably platonic. After all, the

Riviera was still full of American heiresses, younger and richer. Then, back in Lakeport, Miriam found all the eligible men of her own generation either settled husbands or confirmed bachelors. So Mimi had become her chief interest in life, and she was willing to go to any lengths to safeguard her future. Already the girl was speaking favorably of Catholic education. It was high time to come between her and Paul, and now Miriam had a perfect excuse for doing so. If necessary, her allowance could be cut off, though things would hardly come to that, Miriam thought. Mimi had always been a docile enough child.

As Loretta left, Charlotte Phelps caught Miriam's eye and hurried over to the booth.

"Miriam, pet, I thought that woman would never leave! Did you ask her about what I told you?"

"Yes. Of course, she denied the whole thing, but she admits that there has been talk, so that settles it. It's not the kind of talk I want my daughter's name connected with."

"Exactly, darling. Even the best families can't afford *too* many scandals," purred Charlotte. "You know, when I heard that little Italian manicurist in Henderson's talking about those Murrays that way Saturday, I was simply heartsick for Mimi's sake! Naturally, you'll put an end to this Murray affair now, won't you?"

"Naturally. It's what I should have done in the first place. But you haven't mentioned what you heard to anyone else, have you?"

"I don't think so. I may have said something to someone at the Porter Fentons' breakfast at the Hunt Club yesterday, but I'm sure no one paid any attention. Anyway, I'll

tell Natalie Fenton there's nothing to it, the very next time I see her."

"Yes, do," said Miriam, dismissing that aspect of the subject. "If only I hadn't mailed the Murrays those tickets for the Banquet! The wife is just the type to jump at it, I'm sure. But I thought it might be wise, in case he should be elected, you know."

"Yes, I suppose that's something we must be prepared for," sighed Charlotte. "At least she looked fairly decent when you pointed her out to me at dinner the other day."

"Oh, yes, she does make rather a striking appearance, with that white hair and the blue eyes and everything she wears designed to show them off. She'd be more bearable than some we've had to endure," Miriam conceded. "But do you realize, Charlotte, the Catholics have run Lakeport for twelve years now? That crowd that's in now is a regular dynasty — all intermarried into each other's families. Next thing we know the Republicans will be nominating a Catholic!"

"Heaven forbid!" said Charlotte, leading the way back to their box.

## Chapter 10

WHILE it was hardly true that St. Ignatius boys lived from dance to dance, as Stella Maris girls were said to do, the dance as the most elaborate form of college social event held unique importance. At St. Ignatius these days the question was not "Are you going?" but "Which hag are you dragging this time?" — especially among the freshmen, doubly eager because their first dance as college men was in honor of their own class. Thus when Mimi Jordan called Wednesday afternoon, Paul was not only shocked but sorely chagrined at her news.

"But we made the date weeks ago!" he kept protesting, unable to accept what she was saying.

"I know, Paul, and I'm simply sick about it!" Mimi actually sounded as if she had been crying. "But these relatives of Mother's came in unexpectedly today, and I've just got to entertain them Friday night. Mother's so busy with the Banquet For Britain, you know."

"Okay, then, Mimi." There was no use letting her know how much it would have meant to him to show her off at the dance. "I'll be calling you again."

"Yes, Paul," she said. "Do that some time. Good-by now!"

Paul strode upstairs to the twins' large front room, where Peter sat at his desk doing homework.

"That's a hell of a note!" Paul exploded, flinging himself on one of the twin beds.

Peter looked up from his work. "What's up, Paul?"

"Two days before the dance, and Mimi breaks our date!"

"She did? I thought nothing short of two broken legs could keep a girl away from a St. Ignatius dance."

"It's more like two flat tires, I guess. Some relatives of her mother's she's got to entertain Friday night."

"Gosh, that is tough — for both of you."

"Especially for me. She did sound quite broken up, though, I'll say that much. When we said good-bye, it was almost as if she didn't expect to see me again."

"I smiled, so did you, but both of us knew, it was my last good-bye to you!" Peter sang, laughing. "Buck up, kid! You know you can see her any time you feel like it. Things just come up like that once in a while."

"Meanwhile, though, who will I get for the dance at this late date?"

"That, as they say, is the question. Well, you're the one with the little red book. Better start using those numbers."

"Pat Hartman always seemed to go for me," Paul mused. "Do you know if Joe has definitely dated her?"

"I suppose so, but I'm not sure. I haven't seen much of Joe all week. Maybe he thinks we want to cut him out with Father Carmody."

"Guess it won't do any harm to try Pat, anyway." Paul went downstairs again and dialed the Hartmans' number. He could hear the catch in Pat's voice when she realized who was calling.

"Oh — Paul! Well, how's everything?"

"Fine and dandy, Gorgeous." Paul turned on all his charm. "Except for one thing. You'd never believe this, but I've been so up to my ears with that play of mine



and stuff at school that I never remembered till this very afternoon there's a dance Friday! To wit, the freshman-senior dance in the Lakeport ballroom, semiformal. So jumping on my pogo stick, I went galumphing off to the nearest phone, in quest of Patricia, fairest of all Hartmans —"

"Just a minute now. You mean you're asking me to the dance?"

"That is correct. That is absolutely correct! Give the lady ten silver dollars!"

"And give the alleged gentleman one wooden nickel to make another phone call!" Pat retorted. "Even if I hadn't had a date for *weeks*, Paul Murray, do you think I'd go with you on the last minute like this?"

"I told you how it was, didn't I?" Paul protested.

"Better try that line on someone who doesn't know you! It's too bad Mimi didn't break your date sooner, so you could have got someone else in time!"

"Now, Pat, don't get me wrong —"

"I haven't! Furthermore, if I never got to the dance, I certainly wouldn't be found dead there with *you* — any more than Mimi would!"

She hung up with a slam that left Paul's ear ringing. Upstairs, he reported the surprising conversation to Peter.

"She was probably just mad at you for calling so late," Peter suggested. "After all, two days before an important dance is pretty short notice for a girl like Pat."

"But what did she mean by that crack about not going with me anymore than Mimi would? What's wrong with me? Am I slipping?"

"Listening for the patter of little crows' feet again?" Peter laughed. "Relax, Paul. You're going places fast in

school, aren't you? I'll be surprised if you're not picked to represent St. Ignatius High in the freshman ceremonies at the dance."

"Yeah. Sure." Paul took comfort in thoughts of his budding extracurricular career. Good old Pete could always think of the right thing to say when a guy felt low. "If Mimi can't come, it's just her tough luck. I'll dig someone else up."

"That's the spirit!" Peter smiled. "How about Joe's kid sister? Janet says she's wild about you."

"You mean she's wild, period," said Paul. "There are things worse than staying home from the dance."

By dinnertime he had tried three more possibilities, all with a lack of success that was singular for him. When he explained the situation to his parents, his mother seemed quite surprised.

"Isn't that strange?" she said. "I didn't see anything in the papers about any relatives of Mrs. Jordan coming to town. Usually her every move is reported."

"It couldn't be that the mother made Mimi break the date for any reason, could it?" Dr. Murray suggested.

"Of course not!" said Caroline sharply. "Why should she do a thing like that? It was only Monday, you know, we got those invitations to the Banquet For Britain. She must have forgotten to enclose a note, but I know they were from her."

"Invitations, at ten bucks a head!" laughed Bob. "When is the thing, anyway?"

"This coming Saturday," said Caroline, hastening to add, "I suppose they just didn't get around to sending some of the invitations till this week."

"Or maybe it wasn't going over as big as they thought

at first," Peter suggested and received a withering glance from his mother.

"Saturday? We can't go to that, Caroline," Bob protested. "It's the night of the big rally on the west side!"

"You mean *you* can't, dear. There'll be lots of unescorted women there. I won't mind going alone, really." Caroline was not in the least disturbed by his news; indeed, most of her social triumphs had been achieved on her own rather than with Bob. "I saw the most stunning gown in Henderson's the other day. Silver net over aqua moire. Just the thing to set off my sapphires! And with a blue flower in my hair. . . ." She stopped as she saw the expression on Bob's face.

"But Caroline! I knew there was something I meant to tell you since yesterday. The Militellos want us to come to dinner before the rally. The doctor asked me at the office yesterday."

"And you accepted? Without even calling me? Really, Bob!"

Caroline postponed further discussion of this irritating issue until the twins had gone upstairs to finish their homework. She stood before the fireplace, drawn to her full height, while Bob sat down at the desk to work on his speech for Saturday.

"When Mrs. Militello doesn't even know enough to invite me herself," she said coldly, "I don't see why I have to miss the only chance I've ever had to set foot inside the Mayflower Club!"

"Now, Caroline." Bob turned from his work with a patience she found exasperating. "They probably figured there was no need to call you after the doctor asked

me. And however little his wife may know, take it from me he'd be highly insulted if I showed up without you Saturday."

"But the first time Mrs. Jordan has taken any notice of us at all!"

"Never mind her. I didn't care much for the idea of going into politics, as you know, but now that I'm in, I want to do things right. You want me to be elected, don't you?"

"Of course, Bob, for your sake —"

"And for your own." Bob smiled. "You deserve whatever fun you can get out of being the mayor's wife, Caroline, after giving so much of your time to all these Catholic causes you don't really care about."

"What do you mean, I don't really care about?" Caroline flared.

"Just that I know it's not as much fun for you as people may think. You'd rather be rubbing elbows with the Jordans at things like this banquet Saturday. And if I'm elected, you will. But not if the Republicans get all our Polish and Italian support. See what I mean?"

"Yes, dear," sighed Caroline with a resignation she still could not feel. "I suppose you're right. But after you *are* elected, the Militellos won't expect to go around with us or anything like that, will they?"

"That's hard to say. A politician has to keep in with everyone, you know."

That necessity had never been quite as clear to Caroline as now. Yes, she supposed, for every contact like Miriam Jordan she would have to make a dozen like Mrs. Militello. Oh, well, at least she could treat them all with the dignity becoming her position.

"All right, Bob, if you insist," she conceded. "I can't imagine what Mrs. Jordan will think of us, though."

"Just about what she's been thinking, probably," said Bob. "I still say it's ten to one she had a hand in breaking Mimi's date with Paul."

"Anyway, it certainly leaves the poor boy in an awkward fix. I'll tell Irma on the way to the novena tonight; perhaps, if all else fails, Janet might know some nice girl for a blind date."

By Friday, however, Paul was still without a date, blind or otherwise. Thus, Caroline, while preparing her speech for the St. Ignatius parents' meeting, was pleasantly surprised when Olga showed Janet into the living room late that afternoon.

"Well, Janet!" The circumstances seemed to require cordiality. "Did you get someone for Paul, after all? You needn't have come all the way over —"

"No, it's not that, Aunt Caroline." Still in her Mount uniform and without make-up, the girl looked strangely serious. "Are the twins home?"

"Why, yes, they're upstairs, I believe."

"Will you call them, Aunt Caroline?" Janet broke off. "Oh, dear, I should have come before, but I just couldn't, till Mother made me."

"What is this all about, Janet?" Caroline felt her heart quicken in apprehension.

"Wait till the boys are here," said Janet wearily.

Quickly, Caroline went to the foot of the stairs and called them. Peter came bounding down, but Paul fairly dragged himself, dramatizing his deep disappointment about the dance. Both were surprised to see Janet.

"Now, Janet, what *does* all this mean?" asked Caroline, when the four of them were seated. Here, to her astonishment, Janet burst into tears.

"Come now, dear, it can't be that bad." Caroline went over to the girl, administering perfunctory comfort, while both boys looked helplessly distressed.

"It is, though. It's worse than you can imagine," Janet sobbed. When she had recovered herself, she went on. "I don't know how to begin, it's all so awful. But I think I know why Mimi broke her date with Paul, and why he couldn't get anyone else."

"Why? What did I do?" Paul sounded afraid.

"Nothing, Paul. It just kills me to tell you, but maybe it's better to hear it from me. There's been a rumor, a horrible, crazy rumor circulating about you — the two of you."

"About Paul and me?" Peter's face was deadly serious.

"Yes, that's what's so unbelievable. They're saying that you two — well, that you have some kind of 'emotional fixation' — on each other! There, now it's out."

"But I don't even know what that means!" Paul gasped.

"What do you think it means?" Peter snapped. "Good God!"

"Janet, do you realize what you're saying?" cried Caroline, sickened by the dazed horror in her sons' faces.

"I hardly know, Aunt Caroline, and neither do the people who've been repeating it."

"Where could you have heard such a thing?" murmured Caroline numbly, visioning its infinite possibilities for evil.

"It's been all over the Mount since Monday," said Janet. "Rita Militello says it's all over St. Ignatius too. No one believed it at first, of course, but you know how

things get around. Now I suppose they're beginning to wonder."

"I called girls from practically every school in town," said Paul. "Do you think they've all heard? But who'd believe such a thing about us?"

"Oh, probably a lot of them just had dates," said Janet. "But I do think Mimi must have heard it somehow, and, of course, she wouldn't want to get mixed up in any talk like that."

"So now you want to break your date with Peter!" Caroline judged by what she would do in the circumstances. "At least, you've given the real reason."

Janet faced her aunt squarely. "I didn't say anything about breaking our date! You ought to know me well enough for that! I'll do whatever Peter wants to do, but it's for him, Aunt Caroline, not you. After the way you've treated me ever since last summer, I don't think I owe you anything!"

"I'm sorry, Janet, I didn't think you had it in you." Caroline was genuinely surprised by the girl's flash of temper. "I couldn't blame you if you did decide not to go tonight. But why didn't you tell us this awful thing before?"

"I thought it would all blow over before this. Sister Marcella advised me not to worry the family unless it was necessary. But when I heard about Mimi Wednesday night, I knew why. Last night I finally broke it to Mother, and she told me to come in after school today. Someone had to warn you."

"Just when everything was coming along so nice at St. Ignatius!" Paul was muttering. "I was going to run for freshman president! That's a laugh now!"

"What will Dad ever think?" Peter wondered.

"You mustn't tell him!" Caroline was sure of that much. "He has worries enough on his mind as it is. Haven't you noticed how tired he looks lately?"

"But, Mother, we need someone older to talk this over with," Peter protested.

"I'll have Father Carmody come over and spend tomorrow morning with you," Caroline promised.

"Oh, Mother, not him!" Peter grimaced. "Why don't you call Monsignor? Or I can get Father Noonan from school."

"After all, it's right in Father Carmody's line," said Caroline firmly. "He'll help you see how really ridiculous this whole thing is."

"Yes, Carmody's a good egg," Paul admitted. "But no one can just laugh off a thing like this."

"But we must *not* worry your father!" Caroline rapped her sapphire ring on the glass top of the coffee table. "Not a word at dinner tonight! Perhaps you'd better run along, Janet, before the doctor gets home."

"All right, Aunt Caroline." Janet arose. "I don't suppose you'll feel like going to the dance now, will you, Peter?"

"You've got to go!" Caroline broke in sharply. "With both you boys on the committee, what would people think if neither of you showed up tonight?"

"You're right, Mother." Peter looked resolute. "It'll be hell for us, but we've got to see it through. Are you game, Jan?"

"I said I'd do whatever you wanted."

"It's very good of you to stand by us like this, Janet," said Caroline dutifully, accompanying the girl toward the door.



"I hope you won't forget it, Aunt Caroline."

"I only wish Mimi had half your guts," murmured Paul.

Dinner was a dismal affair, but with Peter's help Caroline managed to keep Bob from noticing anything untoward. Paul's obvious depression was easily attributed to his failure to get a date for the dance; he always gave free rein to his moods, anyway.

"Are you sure you don't want me to come with you to that parents' meeting?" asked Bob, when he saw Caroline put on her hat. "If all the other boys' fathers are going to be there —"

"No, dear, you deserve an evening to yourself now and then," said Caroline. He did look very tired, she noticed; his energies must not be wasted on something she could easily handle herself. Besides, she wanted the chance to talk to Russell alone.

Before leaving, she went upstairs for a final word with the boys, who had naturally retired there to talk matters over. Paul lay stretched on his bed, near to tears, she saw, while Peter sat trying to cheer him.

"Don't take it so hard, darlings," she urged. "In a few weeks we'll all look back and laugh over the whole thing."

"You'll be back after the novena, won't you, Mother?" Paul's eyes were pleading.

"Not right afterward, dear." Caroline avoided his gaze. "You remember, tonight is the first parents' meeting at St. Ignatius. But it won't last long. I'll have to be home about ten, anyway, so Peter can use the car."

"Oh," said Paul. "Gee, I don't feel as if I ever want to go back to St. Ignatius again."

"Nonsense, dear, where else could you go?" said Caroline firmly. "You'll feel differently in the morning. Now

cheer up, for heaven's sake! If you stay up here moping all evening, your father will certainly know something's wrong."

Caroline herself, however, was far more worried than she would admit. For the first time in months her comfortable sense of heightening anticipation was completely upset. Reason with herself as she might, she could not ward off a sense of impending disaster, as if somehow the tide of her luck had turned. Just when everything was coming along as planned, what could have brought about this weird complication? The whole thing was so utterly unthinkable. With its Freudian undertones, the gossip seemed more like something out of the decadent Vienna of her reading than safe, normal, everyday Lakeport. It was as if some dark evil force had been loosed from the twisted depths of someone's mind and would not rest until it had destroyed its victims. Only with difficulty did Caroline succeed in controlling these shadowy and quite uncharacteristic fears.

But besides this first reaction of indignant horror, the possibility that the slander might have reached the ears of Republicans unscrupulous enough to use it made her uneasiness more specific. On the way to the novena, Irma, despite her sunny efforts to make light of the problem, agreed that political repercussions were by no means impossible. Whispering campaigns involving candidates' families were nothing new in Lakeport. With this in mind, Caroline prayed furiously during the services that whatever was being said would not interfere with Bob's election. He *had* to win now! Surely God owed her that much for all this cruel embarrassment.

As the novena was to conclude tonight, Father Car-

mody's discourse summarized and clinched the points he had been making all week against what he termed "Sunday Catholics."

"There are all too many" — his persuasive voice filled the church — "who feel entitled to a special throne in heaven just because they have never murdered nor stolen nor committed adultery. But there are seven other commandments, my dear Catholic people! And there are seven deadly sins — none more deadly than the sin of false pride, by which the angels fell, by which the Pharisees lost their immortal souls!

"We all know that of faith, hope, and charity, the greatest is charity. We have all heard time and time again that 'if I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.' Yet how many little acts in all our daily lives are ruled by nothing but pride! Pride in appearance, pride in wealth, pride in birth, pride in intellect, yes, even pride in one's own virtue!

"At the same time we profess the Mystical Body of Christ, we judge others by the most superficial standards of modern paganism. Yes, and there are those who would use the cause of Catholic Action itself as a means for personal advancement! Fortunately, this type is relatively rare among the many devout lay people working to advance the Church Militant, but it is still not rare enough!"

Caroline could have sworn he was looking directly at her; but, of course, that was just one of his oratorical tricks. Probably every woman in church felt the same way. She was glad that she had less reason than most to reproach herself.

"What could be more monstrous, my dear friends," he went on, "than to have God's own truth and use it only to give an odor of sanctity to petty social intrigues? To miss the essential spirit of our faith for some of its accidental forms! Such 'professional Catholics' rank only with those who are ashamed to profess their religion at all. Both sins, opposite in outward effect, grow out of the same worldly vanity."

Russell was a fine one to talk about worldly vanity, thought Caroline, with all his appearances in the public eye.

"Think on these things, my dear Catholic people, when you ask our Blessed Lady to grant the special intentions for which you made this novena. Only your own heart can tell how much or how little you deserve to be so favored."

Caroline had not the least doubt that her prayers should receive prompt attention. Though somewhat shaken by the sinister and unexpected threat to all her well-laid plans, she was far from humbled. Surely the Queen of the Most Holy Rosary would not be so unjust as to disappoint her when she so seldom made novenas. Such a thing might well impair her faith, at least in novenas.

Afterward, she and Irma waited for Father Carmody, but it was not until she had taken Irma home and was driving on toward the college that she told the priest what was uppermost in her mind. He looked extremely serious as he listened.

"So that ugly story is still making the rounds," he observed gravely.

"Still, Father? You mean you've known for some time?"

"I've had reason to, Caroline. It's my own words coming back to me, though changed beyond recognition."

"Russell!" she gasped. "What do you mean?"

"I'll explain everything. Please try to understand how this unfortunate thing came about. Last Friday I was giving my adolescent psychology class a lecture on the subject of emotional fixations — that is, attachments carried to excess. They're commoner than you might think in families — between parents and children, for instance."

"Yes, yes, but how did the twins get into it?" Caroline's curiosity to know the whole truth checked even her growing resentment against Russell.

"I used them as an example — not by name, of course. I know now it was unjustified and there's no such fixation between them, even potentially, but at the time I was going on what you yourself told me."

"What *I* told you? When? I never even thought of such a thing."

"Not in those precise psychological terms, perhaps. But you remember the day you came to organize the parents, how you lamented Peter's social maladjustment, and so on?"

"You know I never meant anything like that!"

"How was I to know? I'm not trying to justify myself, Caroline, but after all, if what you told me had been true, what cause could there be but Peter's devotion to Paul? You yourself as much as said that was all that stood in the way of his following a vocation, didn't you?"

"Well, I thought it was." Caroline had a feeling of being caught in her own trap.

"No you didn't, Caroline. For the simple reason that Peter never had a vocation."

"How do you know? You haven't even got to know him at all."

"Nor shall I ever, probably. After all the vocational hints I threw at him, on your say-so, he undoubtedly got the impression I was trying to railroad him into the Order."

Forced into a corner, Caroline decided to fight back. After all, she had done Russell no harm, but, intentionally or not, he might have done her a great deal. She was still the injured party.

"What you say may be all very true," she said loftily, "but the fact remains that you did start this dreadful rumor about the twins. If what you told your class was as harmless as what I told you, how did all this other kind of talk start?"

"I wish I knew, Caroline. Last Monday, as soon as I heard about it, I spoke very sharply to the entire class and told them there was absolutely no foundation to such gossip. All week I kept my ear to the ground for any more of it, but there's been nothing, so I thought it had died down till you just mentioned it."

"Perhaps it has, at that." Caroline felt somewhat relieved. "Just hearing it today, of course, the shock is still fresh in my mind. The one thing that makes me wonder how far it's gone is the way Mimi Jordan broke her date with Paul."

"It's quite possible that may have had nothing to do with the story, Caroline. Naturally, that was the first thing that occurred to Janet because she'd been worrying about it, but that doesn't make it so. In fact, it's too bad she had to tell you at all. It might have been better if the boys had never known."

"Yes, it's taken a terrible effect on them. They've got along so well at college so far."

"This may be the price of that popularity, Caroline. No one spreads rumors about nonentities. Unfortunately there's always a certain element, even at St. Ignatius, who'd just naturally resent two freshmen being made so much of and seize any chance to bring them down to the common level — or lower."

"I think I understand now, Father," said Caroline, grateful for his rational explanation. She was in no position, she realized, to hurl the accusations that had first occurred to her. If Russell said no more about her responsibility in planting the idea, she could forgive his unwitting part in spreading it.

"I've done all I could to kill the thing at its source," he said. "I only wish there were something else I could do of more practical help."

"Perhaps there is." A new idea had occurred to Caroline. In spite of what she had just learned, why not go through with her plan of letting Russell counsel the boys? If he told them the whole story, or as much as he thought good for them to hear, then surely he would win Peter's confidence. No more vocational encouragement would be necessary; that had been too crude an approach for a boy like Peter. The sheer force of good example, the more telling because it would be entirely unconscious, might prove far more effective in the long run. Once Peter came to trust and admire Father Carmody sufficiently, it should not be too difficult to see that he carried that admiration to the point of imitation — to choosing the same way of life, in short. Surely Russell could have no objections if things worked out that way.

"The boys are naturally all broken up," she said aloud. "We don't want to worry their father at this time, of course, but they do need more help than I can give. I wish you could come over and talk to them tomorrow morning. Otherwise I may even have difficulty in getting them back to school Monday."

"I'd be very glad to, Caroline, if you think they'll listen to anything I have to say, under the circumstances."

"We'd all be very grateful to you, Father," she said sweetly.

In spite of her iron self-control, the parents' meeting, her first public appearance since she had heard the rumor, was more of an ordeal than she had expected. She could scarcely look at anyone without wondering how much they had heard about the twins, and how much they believed or suspected. Even Father Carmody's warm introduction sounded hollow tonight, Caroline felt.

"In Lakeport, as we all know," he said, "wherever there is anything Catholic to be done, there we can always find Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, leading, organizing, directing in the way that has made her name synonymous with Catholic Action of the most active sort. Thanks to her tireless efforts, you parents of St. Ignatius College students are now to enjoy all the rights and privileges of a parents' society. I think I may safely say that no one but Mrs. Murray could possibly have conceived and carried through such a plan at this particular time. Ladies and gentlemen, it is with a sense of awe that I give you Mrs. R. Emmett Murray."

Adjusting her pince-nez, Caroline arose. With her large hat, her blue velvet dress set off by pearl earrings and necklace and her corsage of white rosebuds, she was



glad that she looked her best tonight as she gazed from the stage of the small auditorium at the nondescript finery of the other women, sitting beside the minor businessmen, obscure professionals, and white-collar workers who were their husbands. None of the men looked even as distinguished as Bob. That was one drawback about St. Ignatius; so many of the better Catholic families sent their sons to college out of town. But after all, that only made the Murrays shine the more by comparison.

"Our Father Carmody is too modest," she confided to her audience when she had outlined the ostensible purposes of the organization. "No matter what he says, this society could never really have been formed without the most complete co-operation and the most energetic work on his part. Only the idea was mine. It was Father Carmody who, in spite of numerous other activities known to you all, put that idea into practical form. It was he who notified you parents and thus made this meeting possible. Speaking as one who has known him a long time, I can assure you we're very lucky indeed to have Father Carmody as our moderator!"

With a dazzling smile in his direction, she sat down. There, that should keep him properly buttered up for her revised plans. He took over the meeting again, and when the rough basis for a constitution had been drawn up, it was decided to elect a temporary president and let him or her appoint the other officers until a regular election could be held, when they all knew each other better.

"Really, I don't deserve such an honor!" Caroline was all dewy-eyed surprise when she was unanimously chosen president; she knew she should have no difficulty retaining

the office as long as she desired. Promptly, she appointed Mrs. Militello as acting secretary, and as treasurer the wife of a Polish lawyer she knew to be politically influential on the east side.

When the meeting was adjourned with a prayer by Father Carmody, Caroline moved among the parents, pouring out more concentrated charm than she usually did in a whole week. That frightful story must be checked at any cost! Mrs. Militello looked properly honored by her new position.

"You and Dr. Murray are coming to eat at my house tomorrow night?" She smiled, as if she were not quite sure.

Caroline beamed back. "Oh, yes, I'm looking forward to it. I simply adore the Italian cooking at Leonardo's!"

When the last parents had gone into the cafeteria, where refreshments were being served, Caroline turned to Russell.

"Well, it seems to be coming along nicely, doesn't it?" she observed.

"How could it miss, with you to guide it?"

"I do *try* to handle things right," said Caroline modestly. "But I must be going now, so Peter can use the car for the dance."

"Do you mean to say he's coming?" Russell's dark eyes widened in surprise.

"Yes, he and Janet decided to go ahead just as if nothing had happened."

"Good for them!" said the priest. "I have to put in an appearance too, as a chaperone, so I'll probably see them there. You know, Caroline, the more I hear about those two boys, the more I'm inclined to think it's not Peter who needs a steady hand so much as Paul."

## Chapter 11

THE honor of driving Father Carmody to the dance was warmly contested among the freshmen, but after due consideration Joe Militello was chosen. Thus when Pat's cocktail party finally dispersed, Joe and Pat picked up the priest on their way to the Hotel Lakeport.

Giving Joe his hat and coat to check, Russell made his way through the crowded foyer, amid greetings on all sides. The scent of hundreds of corsages — mostly gardenias — faintly perfumed the air, while the roar of conversation vied with the brassy strains of the dance music from the ballroom proper. Around three sides of the latter ran a balcony — a perfect place from which to keep an eye on things, Father Carmody decided.

From here he enjoyed a colorful panorama of the large, densely packed dance floor, at present further congested by a Conga chain formed by several hundred of the thousand-odd dancers. Shouts of "One, two, *three*, kick!" mingled with the pulsing rhythms of *La Conga*, which was becoming very popular now in the rising vogue of all things Latin-American. Not for the first time, the priest wondered briefly how any Good Neighbor policy could succeed without a great deal more understanding of the Iberian Catholic culture.

As at most dances advertised as "semiformal," all degrees of formality in dress could be seen. There were

boys in everything from sport combinations to tails, with girls in every variation between a sweater and skirt and a strapless gown. The freshmen were easily recognizable by their name placards, which were to be discarded at midnight. At that time the most promising representative of each high school, chosen by Father Carmody, as he passed the orchestra stand, would hand in his card and come up to join in the Alma Mater song — a traditional rite symbolic of the new class's acceptance by the rest of the school. Until then the selections were a secret.

Most of the first-year men, to whom evening clothes were still something of a novelty, wore tuxedos, and nearly all their dates were only too glad of the opportunity to appear in floor-length gowns; but the Sem girls, who always managed to stand out from the rest, had evidently agreed on short dresses, the priest concluded, when Pat and Joe appeared with the check for his wraps.

Despite a rather scrawny orchid apparently ordered by Joe without asking what she intended to wear, Pat looked as well turned out as usual, in a neatly tailored gray suit, with her turban, pumps, costume jewelry, and large, shoulder-strapped handbag all as vividly red as her lips and nails. Father Carmody was duly impressed.

"Patricia Hartman," he beamed, "I hereby pick you for the St. Ignatius Prom Queen of 1942. Just you wait and see!"

"Now, Father, none of your Irish blarney!" laughed Pat.

"I just met Pete Murray in the line at the check room," Joe reported. "He says Paul is home with a sick headache."

Pat snorted, but Father Carmody wondered if any of the triumph of her cocktail party and her appearance with Joe would be dulled by Paul's absence. Somehow he

could not quite believe that a girl like Pat would voluntarily change from Paul to Joe. The latter's good qualities were not the kind that generally attracted teen-age girls to the extent of outweighing more obvious appeal. If he knew more about that situation, he might know more about the Murrays. So the priest speculated as the young couple went downstairs to dance.

Presently amid the swirling crowd below he was able to pick out Peter and Janet, fox-trotting to the bouncing measures of *Scatterbrain*. Now that the novelty of jitter-bugging had worn off, its more violent forms were seldom seen at college dances — indeed, they were hardly possible in evening clothes — but the milder variations were still permissible. Joe, for instance, brows knit in deepest concentration, was shagging away for dear life, though Pat followed him with utmost detachment. Those like Joe who excelled at the fanciest steps, Russell had long since concluded, were seldom notably good at anything else.

He preferred to follow the more graceful progress of his niece and Peter. Though lacking the imperturbable poise of a Sem girl, Janet seemed to him a very sweet child, and Peter, he felt sure tonight more than ever, easily made up in character whatever he might lack of Paul's surface charm. Yes, a perfectly natural boy-and-girl attraction, if ever he had seen one. Had he not been away from Lakeport so long or had he come to know Janet better since his return, he would never for a moment have been misled by Caroline's veiled hints about Peter's retarded social development. Indeed, although Caroline and Irma appeared to be the best of friends, the more he thought about it the more certain he became that the still missing motive behind Caroline's plans for Peter

might well be a desire to eliminate Janet in the most effective way possible. Why had not that occurred to him before? If this was not the exact explanation, it was very close to the truth, he felt sure.

From their expressions it was impossible to tell whether or not the two were actually enjoying the dance, thought Russell, looking down at them — Peter, blond and boyish in his tuxedo, Janet bewitchingly demure in a pink net gown, bustled in the current manner, with the rosebuds on her shoulder and the matching snood on her black hair carrying out the effect of old-fashioned charm. What were they talking about, the priest wondered.

"Honestly, I've seen just about every one I ever went to school with here tonight," said Janet, making conversation. "I still haven't finished figuring out who came with whom and why."

Peter was touched by her effort to behave as if they were enjoying themselves at an ordinary dance.

"Whoever came with whom," he said, "they all seemed to stop at Pat Hartman's cocktail party, from what I've heard. Paul and I must have been the only ones in Freshman Arts not invited."

"You know why that is," said Janet promptly. "She's still stuck on Paul, and she's just being nasty about it."

"I hope that's all there is to it. If only I knew! That's the worst part. With everyone being so tactful, I can't tell how much anyone really believes or suspects."

"Maybe this afternoon I made it sound worse than it is," Janet suggested. "Just having to tell you got me all upset. I'll bet, after all, the whole thing will die down before you know it."

"Not before a lot of other people know it too," sighed

Peter. "But at least it's swell of you to stick by me, Jan."

"Peter! Why wouldn't I? Don't you think I know how you've stuck to me against — well, everything."

"You mean my mother?"

"Who else? I know she'd rather have you going with someone like Pat or Mimi. But I don't care, as long as I suit you."

"Janet!" Peter pressed her closer. "You know you're tops with me. We've always been more than cousins."

"They say we Mounties always get our man," said Janet with a tremulous little laugh, and changed the subject. "Did you notice the Sem girls tonight? The ones who aren't conspicuous enough with their short skirts are wearing those big Lilly Dache hats. *Mon Dieu, quel chic!*"

Janet was Peter's only comfort in this unreal nightmare of all the dances he had ever attended. The same people he always saw were here, saying the same gay, meaningless things. But what lay behind all the bright chatter tonight? He hesitated to suggest trading dances even with his best friends, and those who suggested it themselves he suspected of merely showing their broad-mindedness. The comfortable aura of popularity in which Peter had moved since childhood was disturbed for the first time, and his self-confidence was tottering.

Of course, his mother had been competent and kind enough in her way, and that was all that could be expected of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, but even though next Sunday was not the regular one for a family supper, he and Paul planned to take their troubles to their grandmother. She might not understand what it was all about, but somehow she was always a comfort — even better than

Aunt Irma. Meanwhile, in spite of all Janet's determined cheerfulness he could not shake off his depression.

His gloom was only increased by thoughts of Paul, sitting at home, forbidden to confide in his father and left with nothing to do but brood. It would have been better to come to the dance with anyone, just to ease the plunge Monday, to thicken his skin a little. Paul indeed was not so sensitive in most matters, but anything that so vitally involved the reputation he was building for himself at St. Ignatius touched him on the quick. Though Peter took less interest in school politics, he could understand his brother's ambitions, and the disastrous effect this sort of talk could have on them. No matter how completely cleared afterward, a name once smudged was fatal for one of Paul's inclinations.

"This is going to be worse for Paul than it is for me," Peter confided to Janet, over Cokes in the hotel drugstore, after they had been unable to find seats in the crowded lounge bar. "He thought he, or maybe both of us, would be picked to represent St. Ignatius High in the freshman doings tonight."

"Maybe you will yet," said Janet without much conviction.

"Fine products of Jesuit training we'd look like, with all this talk going around! It'll probably be Joe Militello or someone like that. Anyway, we didn't polish the apple enough with Father Carmody, if you don't mind my saying that about your uncle."

"I hardly know him. Monsignor seems a lot more like my real uncle. What's Father Carmody really like, anyway?"

"Oh, he's all right, I guess," Peter conceded. "He just



seems to have vocations on the brain, though. Paul and I were out with him a couple of times, and the conversation always got back to what a lot the Jesuits have to offer a fellow. So we decided to steer clear of him. You know the type."

"Don't I ever, though! You should hear some of those nuns at the Mount — Oh, look, Peter, it's nearly midnight. We might as well go back for the Grand March, shall we?"

"Yes, I suppose so," Peter agreed, though the prospect was anything but appealing to him. They walked the length of the glittering lobby, which was thronged with couples from the dance, mostly streaming back toward the ballroom now, except for upperclassmen and alumni whom no freshman ceremonies could interest as much as the chance of a place in the bar.

After much confusion, while the orchestra played a medley of popular college songs, the couples began to march around the floor — led by the chairman of the dance, a Science student. The Science and Business men numerically dominated the class, Peter knew, but the offices they could gain were limited to such rare class affairs as this. The organizations were what counted in the student council, Paul always said, and only the Arts men had leisure enough to devote to these.

During the second march around, by fours, Peter and Janet found themselves walking with Joe and Pat, who had been behind them. Taking Joe's left arm, Janet kept up an animated conversation, though Pat, as if to justify her failure to invite the Murrys to her party, limited herself to a distant smile.

"Too bad you didn't know everyone else was coming formal tonight, Pat," Janet could not resist saying, but

Pat only raised her eyebrows and murmured, "It's really not such a treat when you're used to it."

As they marched around by eights, Peter began to be thoroughly weary of the Alma Mater, blared by the orchestra, chorus after swung chorus. The pointed gaiety of the music was so out of tune with his own mood that he felt as if he never wanted to hear it again. This was the night to which he and Paul had so long looked forward — their first college dance! What a letdown it must be for poor Janet, too, no matter how she kept up appearances. He could picture Paul's face when he told him whoever had been chosen to represent St. Ignatius High. They were being picked this time around.

He pressed Janet's hand with nerveless fingers, steeling himself to see Joe Militello summoned by the smiling priest on the bandstand. Yes, there went two from the public high schools, now the one from the Christian Brothers' Institute, now — was it possible! Peter saw that Father Carmody was looking past Joe, straight at *him!*

"From St. Ignatius High School, Peter Murray." The words came dimly through the music. Dazed, he led Janet over to where the other girls stood, handed the priest his card, and joined the other boys in the space cleared on the orchestra platform.

When all fourteen boys were assembled, Father Carmody read out their names, their high schools, and the school activities in which they had already taken part. For the first time Peter felt a spark of personal liking for the man, not just the routine respect due all priests. Maybe he had picked him only for Janet's sake, or even just out of pity for what he was going through, but nevertheless the unexpected honor seemed to make Peter

really belong at St. Ignatius again. Whatever was behind it, the gesture under the circumstances seemed a kind and warmhearted one, and made Peter wonder if he and Paul had been too quick to dismiss Father Carmody's interest in them as mere desire to perpetuate the Order.

As the band played the final chorus of the Alma Mater, Peter experienced his first real surge of school spirit. That was the only way he could describe this strange new feeling which he could not put into words or communicate even to Paul. Small time and old fashioned it might be, but this was *his* college now. These new classmates, almost strangers yet, would be his friends through the years to come in Lakeport. He realized that he no longer cared about not going to Georgetown. To his embarrassment, Peter could almost feel sentimental tears behind his eyelids as he joined the other freshmen singing:

Then gather round and swell the sound,  
Our hearts with ardor light. . . .

For the rest of the night, Peter almost enjoyed himself, aided by Janet's efforts to carry on as usual. Every word of friendly congratulation helped a little more to restore his emotional balance. By the time the orchestra leader had announced *Stardust* as the last dance of the evening, Peter felt nearly like himself. In the usual crush at the check room he even forced himself to ask Joe where he and Pat intended to go afterward, so that they might meet there.

It was one of the all-night restaurants where everyone always went for a snack after a dance. While waiting for their orders, some couples, as if they had not danced

enough, waltzed idly about the deserted restaurant, to the music of the juke box — the boys in their topcoats, most of the girls, like Janet, in black velvet evening wraps, some with kerchiefs tied peasant fashion around their heads.

Joe, who had only tonight found out that Janet was Father Carmody's niece, seemed to take new interest in her on that account, Peter thought. Or possibly he was just being a good sport about not having been picked in Peter's place, as he certainly must have hoped. So even Joe had been indirectly hurt by the consequences of that mysterious rumor. Meanwhile Peter was left with Pat, whose evening, he suspected, had not turned out quite as she had planned.

"Did you have a good time tonight?" he asked politely, as he swung her off to the plaintive accompaniment of *What's New?*

"But perfect!" replied Pat automatically. "I don't know when I've been to such a smooth dancel!"

They danced in silence for a while, and then Pat asked, "Was Paul really sick tonight, Peter?"

"You ought to know the answer to that, Pat," he said, remembering her scathing refusal of Paul.

"You mean *he* couldn't get a date? Well, shet mah mouth!"

"Are you surprised? Don't tell me you don't know why Mimi broke their date! Or aren't you still up on the latest dirt?"

"Huh?" Pat thought a moment. "It couldn't have been — no, I guess it couldn't."

"What?" Peter prompted.

"Oh, just some drivel I heard that sister of Joe's

babbling, about you and Paul and an emotional complex or something. I never gave it a second thought."

"Well, a few other people did, including Mrs. Jordan, I guess. But you must know how it was for Mimi. She couldn't afford to be seen with Paul, and you couldn't afford to have us to your house, could you?"

"Oh, Peter, is that what you thought?" Pat almost lost step. "No wonder things have been so strained all evening. Believe me, I hadn't even thought of that silly rumor since Sunday. If I'd had any idea, naturally I would have gone out of my way to invite you. The only reason I didn't in the first place was that I just didn't want to have Paul and Mimi."

"But you knew since Wednesday he wasn't bringing her."

"I was sure he'd get someone else. And after the things I said over the phone, I couldn't very well invite him. I was horrid, I know, but that excuse he cooked up was so obvious it was insulting. If I'd known he wasn't coming, I would have loved to have you and Janet."

"Well, thanks just the same," Peter smiled ruefully.

"So now you know all. But please don't tell Paul everything!" Pat begged. "He'll think I'm just ready to come running, and I'm *not* the heart-on-the-sleeve type."

Never before had Peter really understood the sophisticated Sem girl — so different from Janet, and yet in her own way no less nice a person. Her explanation of the party all but removed the last of the weight that had oppressed him earlier in the evening. If Pat Hartman, with her grievance against Paul, could be a friend in need, then Peter felt that he could rely on almost anyone he knew to disregard the gossip.

But when on his return home he found Paul still awake and tossing, he could no more convey his regained confidence than his new feeling toward St. Ignatius. Paul, who had discovered an account of Pat's party in an evening paper, refused to accept any explanation but his own.

"Sure, Pat likes me!" he snarled bitterly. "She's crazy about me! Hell, yes, I could tell that from the way she talked on the phone the other day! It's no use, Pete. Anyone can make excuses afterward."

"But, Paul, our real friends couldn't believe anything so crazy about us," Peter argued, "and as for anyone else, why should we give a hoot?"

"You don't care about your reputation at school. I do! I had a future. I tell you, I can't go back there. I'll transfer to Georgetown, Notre Dame, any place where I can make a fresh start!"

"Let's wait and see what Father Carmody has to say," Peter suggested. "Maybe he's not such a bad guy, after all, picking me out tonight and everything."

"Can't you see he was just making a point to show he doesn't care what people say about us? Anyway, that was you, Pete. Where does it leave me? I'll never be able to hold up my head at St. Ignatius again!"

## *Chapter 12*

FATHER CARMODY was spending a very long time upstairs with the boys, thought Caroline; she had told him he must be gone before Bob came home at noon. After an almost sleepless night — her first in years — she could scarcely even concentrate on the morning paper's list of those who had made reservations for tonight's Banquet For Britain. The front page pictured Sir Neville Boyce-Carewe's arrival at the airport, greeted by the officers of the Mayflower Club; George and Loretta had not bothered to join the reception committee. It was small comfort to find, opposite the classified ad page, an account of the dance, with a photo of Russell and the fourteen honored freshmen.

In the long hours of the night she had begun to wonder if somehow she had made a fatal mistake in trying to use Russell for her purpose. He still seemed to be her evil genius. Of course, he probably had not foreseen the horrible way things would work out, and yet, it had all happened within the month since she had first consulted him. Yes, it was just a month from that Wednesday afternoon in Parlor A until yesterday — Friday the thirteenth, aptly enough, she thought — and already her well-ordered world was rocking as it never had before in all her years as Mrs. R. Emmett Murray. She still tried not to let her unreasoning fear of Russell get the best of her, but she

resolved to be very much on her guard with him from now on. Too bad she had even asked him here this morning; Monsignor would have done as well at the moment.

She jumped when the telephone rang. But it was only Irma.

"Well, I guess the kids had a pretty good time at the dance, after all, didn't they?" she rattled on. "I do think it was funny Loretta didn't make Pat ask them to her party, but you know Loretta! I was talking to her this morning, and she said she was surprised to hear Paul wasn't at the dance. It seems Mrs. Jordan met her at the concert Monday night and was asking her if you-know-what was true about the twins. Of course, Loretta went to bat for them as strong as she could, so she says Miriam must have been just looking for a chance to break up Mimi and Paul."

"Perhaps." Caroline forced the word out. "Well, undoubtedly the worst of this whole wretched business is past by this time. Father Carmody's upstairs now, trying to straighten out the boys."

"Oh, that's good. Janet says he was very nice to Peter last night."

"Of course, what they didn't know might never have hurt them," Caroline said coldly, "if Janet hadn't blurted the whole thing out in that hysterical way yesterday."

"I made her do that, Carrie, and I still think it was better for them to hear it that way than from some outsider. You know Janet wouldn't hurt Peter for the world! She's just going downtown now. Pat asked her to have lunch with her, to talk over the dance—to explain, I suppose. . . ."



Irma chattered on for several minutes more, but Caroline was left with nothing but the cold, implacable certainty that Mimi had indeed broken the date for the very reason Janet had guessed. Everyone in Lakeport must have heard that ghastly rumor in some form if even Miriam Jordan knew of it, she thought helplessly. But since apparently no one believed it, perhaps no lasting harm would be done. It was certainly distressing at present, but its ultimate effects, after all, might work out for the best, Caroline tried to persuade herself.

It was at least possible now that the bond thus established between Russell and Peter might well lead the boy at last to consider a religious life, especially if Janet's impulsive way of breaking the news could be made to appear inexcusably tactless and unnecessary — a mere occasion to display her own "loyalty," which would have been far better proved if she had simply gone to the dance without saying anything. Yes, that argument might very well serve as an opening wedge to pry Peter's interest from its unworthy object and slant it in the proper direction.

To be sure, the circumstances might not be all Caroline could have wished, but in the long run no one would remember that. Secular priests and even some orders might seem rather common to the better class of non-Catholics, but the Jesuits had earned world-wide respect. Yes, indeed, Peter as a difficult schoolboy was one thing, but as a member of the Society of Jesus was quite another. . . .

When Russell came downstairs, alone, his expression was extremely troubled.

"Caroline," he said, "something most unexpected has

happened, something that will shock you even more than me. You may have a son in the Jesuits, after all."

"Oh, Father!" Now that the moment had come so soon, Caroline was suddenly near to tears, partially of relief and partially regret. She had not been prepared for such immediate results. God was on her side, after all! "To think it took this terrible thing to open poor Peter's eyes!"

Russell sat down in a chair opposite hers.

"I said you'd be shocked. It's not Peter, Caroline, it's Paul."

"*Paul!*" Caroline almost shrieked. She half rose from her chair, and then sank back, stunned. Inane sentences like "You must be joking" rose to her lips, but she knew that this was no joke. This unbelievable moment was the one she had been unconsciously dreading ever since last June. This was the meaning of her intuitive distrust of Russell, that instinctive warning she had blindly disregarded in recent months. This was the terrible thing she had known Russell would do to her one day.

"Russell," she whispered hoarsely, "what have you done? How did you ever make my Paul —"

"Get hold of yourself, Caroline!" said Russell sternly. "I think it's time you and I had a few things out, quite calmly and reasonably, if possible. Do you mind if I smoke?"

She glared at him, but he took out a pack of cigarettes, made the gesture of offering her one and then lit his own, as if settling down for a comfortable chat. Caroline could have killed him at that moment.

"First of all," he began, "what makes you think the Jesuits would accept your precious Paul? Religious orders

were never intended as a refuge for those who can't face the problems of life in the world. There's no sacrifice in giving up something you don't want, anyway."

"But you just said —"

"I'm sorry if I made it sound more definite than it is. But it is interesting to see how much remains of that noble, sacrificial attitude you were so willing to take about Peter."

"You mean Paul's not going?" Caroline felt as if Russell were playing some kind of game with her, but she was too confused to anticipate the next move.

"I didn't say that either. As a matter of fact, of course, leaving Lakeport at this time is the worst possible thing he could do. People would surely take it as a confirmation of that rumor. I kept trying to tell Paul that, and so did Peter, but nothing we could say could dissuade him."

"I don't believe you," said Caroline flatly, from conviction that was deeper than reason. "You're just saying that now. You must have talked him into it."

"So help me, Caroline, I've spent the past two hours trying to talk him out of it! You can ask either of the boys —"

"Oh, naturally, you'd do it in such a way that they wouldn't even realize, poor darlings. What match are they for a Jesuit like you? No, it's too perfect, Russell. You knew I had my heart set on seeing Peter a priest, so now you've taken Paul instead. Do you think I don't see that?"

Russell's jaw tightened. "My dear woman! You sound beside yourself, but I hope you're capable of believing that whatever I think of you, it would never poison my attitude toward those two boys!"

Caroline no longer even cared what she said. She had

the helpless feeling that she was flailing wildly about her with a clumsy bludgeon instead of her usual deadly rapier, in this most dangerous duel of her life. Groping for any weapon to beat down Russell's cool, maddening logic, she hurled charges at fast as they welled up in her mind.

"Don't think you can put me in the wrong this time, Russell Carmody!" she stormed. "It's you who are responsible for this whole monstrous business! You started that horrible report about the boys, and I don't doubt that you spread it, too! You probably planned the whole thing to work out this way — all to punish me for something that happened twenty years ago!"

Instead of losing his temper completely, Russell only continued to look at her with that penetrating gaze that made her feel as if he were looking into the inmost recesses of her soul and uncovering things she did not admit even to herself.

"Come now, Caroline," he said. "Don't add delusions of persecution to your other psychological quirks! You must know that nothing you could say could reproach me any more bitterly than I've been reproaching myself for my part in this, unintentional as it was. Let's not forget, I was brought into it in the first place only to play *your* game. This whole tissue of lies that's caused so much trouble ultimately goes back to you and what you tried to do to Peter."

Caroline kept her hands tightly clenched in her lap until they stopped trembling and she could speak with some measure of calm. She saw that Russell would not be goaded into an angry scene that would leave her with the upper hand. Perhaps the wisest course would be to

throw herself on his mercy — outwardly, at least — before his line of reasoning reached conclusions she had no wish to hear.

“That’s not fair to me, Father. You and I have both made our mistakes, no doubt, but, after all, we were both working toward the same end, weren’t we? We both had only Peter’s own good at heart.”

“You can skip that approach, too,” said Russell, quite unimpressed. “I happen to know whose good you had at heart. It took me a long time — too long — but I think I finally fit the pieces together. Peter wasn’t growing up like Paul, into a clever young social climber — a junior edition of Bert Jordan, in short. One of his chief drawbacks was Janet, but being right in the family, she couldn’t be eliminated and forgotten, like another girl. So something else had to be done about Peter, and what could be nicer and sweeter and holier than making a priest out of him? The next thing was to —”

“Stop it! It wasn’t like that at all. It’s just you and your horrible way of putting things!” Alarmed by the amount he knew and especially by the reference to Bert Jordan, Caroline tried diverting his line of attack. “Of course, I wanted Peter to make more of himself socially, and when he didn’t, I just naturally got the idea he’d make a good priest. I thought you understood that at the time. But that still doesn’t explain how *you* could do such a thing to Paul. He’s always been so popular —”

“He’s always been the weaker of the two, Caroline. Peter said that after the dance last night he could face anything, but all Paul could think was his blighted future at St. Ignatius. He has everything of yours but your strength. Didn’t you even see that?”

"I never thought of it that way. I only know Peter's always been more stubborn."

"The one trait he inherits from you," said Russell. "Peter knows what he wants; Paul doesn't, especially right now. He's so desperate to regain some respect, as he thinks, at school that the Order seems the best way out for him. Of course, such an emotionally unstable boy has no place in the Jesuits, but —"

"But where did he ever get such an idea?" Caroline broke in.

"Indirectly from you, through me. This morning he kept quoting my own words back at me, about the peace and dignity of the life and so on — all the things I ever said for Peter's benefit when I was with the two of them."

"That's all very well, Russell, and what you say may be true, but I'll solve the whole difficulty for you and the Order. I'm simply not going to let Paul go, and that's all there is to it."

"In other words, you're as determined now to keep Paul out of the priesthood as you were to get Peter into it — without in either case consulting the person most concerned. Just who do you think you are, Caroline, God Almighty?"

"Well, what did you expect me to do? You said yourself Paul's decision can't be sincere. Why are you so anxious to keep me out of it? He's my own son —"

"It's time he learned to take the consequences of his own mistakes, Caroline. Let him go through the motions of trying to join the Jesuits and find out for himself that he can't do it, that there's not always an easy way out of anything for Paul Murray. I told him this whole un-

founded idea would be forgotten in no time, but he's built it up so in his own mind that if you make him go right back to St. Ignatius Monday he'll always blame every failure there on this one false rumor. Then he'll be sure it would have been better to go away as he wanted. The one way to prove him wrong is to let him try."

"But I don't understand." Caroline had a mental picture of an iron door clanging shut upon Paul forever, "If he once went, how would I know he'd ever come back? There'd be such difficulties —"

"Good Lord, Caroline!" Russell permitted himself to smile for the first time this morning. "Did you get your conception of the Jesuits from some Gothic novel? You must think we get paid a bounty on every new prospect trapped! Was that why you were so sure I'd play along with you about Peter, regardless of his feelings?"

"We're not talking about Peter now!"

"To get back to Paul, then. I'm sure he won't get even as far as a novitiate house. But if you let him stay home from school and go through all the preliminary red tape of making application for the Order, in another week or two — long before it would be time to leave — he'll be so glad to get back to St. Ignatius on any terms that he'll think twice before he makes any more rash decisions for the sake of his 'prestige.'"

That sounded reasonable enough, but Caroline would not let herself be convinced. Russell must have some trick up his sleeve. After all, it could not be without reason that the word "jesuitical" had come to mean all that was sly and double-dealing. But she could be as subtle as any man alive, Caroline told herself. If she could only

get rid of Russell amicably now, she would soon put an end to Paul's dangerous intention.

"I'm afraid you're leaning over backward in being fair to Peter, Father," she said conversationally. "Don't you think you're being too hard on poor Paul?"

"Not at all. He's been hopelessly spoiled by everyone — even by Peter, good kid that he is — but especially by you."

"Oh, I wouldn't say that. But you must admit he has the more winning personality of the two. Everyone says so."

"Only because he feels compelled to impress everyone with his charm. Deep down, perhaps only subconsciously, he knows Peter has more ability in ways that count, but he's got to keep people from finding that out. That's why he feels such a continuous thirst for more popularity, more publicity at school, more new social conquests."

"How dreadful you can make anything sound!" exclaimed Caroline.

"Ah, I thought you'd see the parallel," said Russell, almost before she had applied the words to herself. "You see, Caroline, Paul is always compensating for a deep-seated inferiority complex, and that's what makes him so much like you."

"Please, Father Russell, no sermons!" More than anything else, she wanted to divert his power of merciless analysis from her. "I've heard enough of them this week at the novena."

"I'm speaking as a psychologist now, not as a priest. Whether you know it or not, Caroline, most of your life you've had a most acute inferiority complex about your religion."



"My religion?" Caroline was surprised. "What a thing to say! When I've always been so proud —"

"Too proud. It's not normal. And I can tell you what made you that way, too."

"I don't want to hear any more!" Caroline protested, subtlety abandoned in her compulsion to head off this conversation before it got any further. "If I needed a psychoanalyst, I could afford to go to a professional!"

"He'd only tell you the same thing, but more brutally. It would take him the first dozen sessions to find out as much about your past life as I already know. And when it was all over, he'd make you face the same basic fact: for over twenty years now you've been compensating for what Bert Jordan did to you."

"How dare you!" Caroline stood up, her eyes narrowed to slits behind their pince-nez. "Priest or no priest, Russell Carmody, you have no right to say such a thing! That man's name has never even been mentioned in this house!"

"Ah, but it's been thought of — dreamed of, too. The one and only Prince Charming, lost not because you weren't beautiful or clever or rich enough but because your religion kept you out of the society he wanted to marry into — the society you've been trying to get into ever since."

"Stop it, *stop it!*" Caroline tried her old trick of seizing the offensive. "You're just trying to make me forget what you've done to Paul!"

"What Paul does is relatively unimportant. But if you let me handle it my way, it may at least give him some sense of responsibility. I'd like to save him from turning out entirely like Bert Jordan."

"Will you stop harping on him! I asked you over here today to help the boys, not to talk about me!"

"Caroline, Caroline, how can I make you see before it's too late?" Russell shook his head. "None of this trouble would have started if you weren't the kind of person you are. It's all a part of the same warped pattern you've made of your life. I happen to be the only one who knows how it all fits in. Believe me, if I've been overfrank, it's only to shock you into a normal Catholic sense of values."

"I think I can judge myself quite well without any help from you!" Caroline refused to be conciliated; his attitude was really unforgivable.

"Perhaps you don't even realize how far you've gone. I've met your type so often before — not only among Catholics, thank God. Madam President — the Great American Clubwoman! Too busy giving lectures on home-making to pay attention to your own family!"

"That," said Caroline, with dignity, "is a nice way for a priest to talk about Catholic Action, I must say! There's nothing I've done that isn't fit to print in the *Catholic Herald*!"

"Exactly. And if it wasn't printed, you wouldn't have done it. There's a line from T. S. Eliot that always reminds me of you, Caroline — something like 'The only sin is to do the right thing for the wrong reason.' That was really the theme of my discourse last night — though I don't flatter myself that it did you any good."

"It's past eleven already. I told you you'd have to leave before noon," said Caroline, as a last resort.

"I won't stay one minute longer than necessary." Russell's manner was still unruffled. "But I must keep you

from doing any more harm than you've done already. When I think of all you must have sacrificed, just to make yourself into a reasonably exact facsimile of those faded butterflies like Miriam Jordan! Why not let yourself be what God and nature intended, a good wife and mother, like Irma, for instance?"

"Irma?" Caroline laughed bitterly. "Why aren't you just a nice, simple parish priest, like Monsignor, for instance?"

"All right, then." Russell conceded the point. "Let's take Loretta. She's no fool, and she's no simple housewife either, as you probably consider Irma. She's enjoyed George's position, she makes the most of her clubs and her social interests, but she sees all those things in their proper perspective. Fine, harmless things in themselves, but not the most important things in life."

"Well, what if they are important to me? You're not living in the world. You don't know what it means to be kept out of what you want most — what you've every right to!"

"Let's not talk about rights. You've always had so much more than most women would consider their right — plenty of money, this beautiful home, two fine sons, a husband who evidently worships you —"

Caroline cut him short. "Oh, I know, I know!" Nothing irritated her more than being told how lucky she was, unless it was by someone she knew envied her. "I appreciate all that, but I want to get the most out of it. Once Bob is elected, I'll be satisfied. Then perhaps I'll think about what you've been telling me."

"All right, Caroline, I'll say no more." With a weary shrug, Russell stood up. "I can see this was a complete

waste of time. But don't expect the election to change you. You'll never have what you want — because you'll never want what you have."

Caroline forgot everything else in a surge of relief that he was going at last. But after all, since they would have to continue seeing each other at the parents' meetings and perhaps in other connections around the city, for the sake of diplomacy she decided to make a strategic retreat.

"Perhaps you're right, Father," she said, resuming the gracious mask of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray. "I'm afraid the shock of so much happening at once upset me rather badly this morning. In the heat of the moment, I'm sure we both said a lot of things we didn't mean."

"Did we?" said the priest. "In any case, Caroline, think over what I said about Paul and forget your plans for Peter. No more tricks, please, and no big, maternal scenes. Paul will come out of this much more of a man, if you'll just trust me."

When he had gone, Caroline sat very still, staring blindly at the design in the blue rug at her feet. She knew that every bitter word had been meant as nothing between them had been since that faraway night she had told him of her engagement. Echoes of the shattering conversation would haunt this room forever, she feared. The furniture must be altogether rearranged as soon as possible. That chair where Russell had sat would be nice, re-covered, in the boys' room. In its present place she would never be able to pass it without seeing him there, his keen face earnest, his dark eyes fixed accusingly on her.

As she heard the boys coming downstairs, feelings of motherly concern returned.

"We just saw Father Carmody leave," Peter explained. "He told us not to come down until he was gone."

"Well, Mother, what do you think?" asked Paul rather nervously, sitting down beside her on the davenport.

"Oh, Paul, how can you be sure?" She gazed at him with tearful eyes. Somehow all her arguments about the joys of the religious life seemed to vanish when applied, even hypothetically, to Paul.

"I'm as sure as anyone is of anything these days," said Paul. "Grandpa always hoped there'd be another priest in the family, like Monsignor, you know."

"And you always said you'd never stand in the way if either of us had a vocation," Peter reminded her.

"I didn't know it would be like this," sighed Caroline. Indeed, she decided, this was really too much to bear. No matter what Russell said, she would find a way to change Paul's mind herself. The idea of a hostage to God no longer appealed to her. The election was almost a sure thing, and, after the novena and all, surely she had undergone enough to satisfy the most exacting Justice. Her disappointment over the banquet, too, still rankled. Something had to come out her way!

When Bob arrived home from the city hall a little later, the other three were still sitting in the living room.

"Oh, Bob!" Caroline greeted him, bravely but obviously fighting back the tears. "You don't know what a terrible thing has happened! Our Paul wants to go off and become a Jesuit!"

"Paul? A Jesuit?" Bob looked more worn than ever as he sank into a chair, taking in the incredible words. "When did all this happen? Isn't that a very hasty decision, son?"

"No, Dad, really, I've been thinking about it for some time, and I think I've considered all the angles. I've had a lot of time to think this week."

"Now, Paul, surely your disappointment last night has nothing to do with this?"

"Of course not, Dad. It's not that at all." Paul stopped as he caught his mother's warning glance.

"It's that hateful Father Carmody who's talked him into this," Caroline put in, before Bob could ask any more. "Those Jesuits stop at nothing to get new recruits. It wasn't till he'd talked to him this morning that Paul got this absurd notion."

"Oh, were you over to school this morning?" asked Bob.

"No, Father Carmody was here," said Peter. "But honestly, Dad, he didn't —"

"Yes, he wanted to see the boys about something or other." Caroline silenced Peter with a look. "He's kept after them ever since they started college to get one of them into the Order — if not both."

"Well, it all seems much too sudden to me," Bob observed. "Why not think it over for the rest of the school year, at least, Paul? The Order will still be open, and you'll know your own mind better by then. You want to be very sure about a thing like that."

"I am sure. I want to go now!" Paul insisted.

Caroline seized her opportunity. "I think you're perfectly right, Bob. You can just tell Father Carmody or anyone else, Paul, that your father absolutely forbids you to leave before the end of the year."

"Aw, Mother, you know how it is!" Paul pleaded helplessly. But Caroline made no reply. She hated to refuse him anything, but it was for his own sake that she would

not risk letting him be maneuvered into the Jesuits. What if by some chance he *were* accepted and he *did* find the life to his liking?

When Bob spoke of taking a nap, so as to be fresh for the rally, Caroline was quick to encourage the idea, still fearful lest any slip reveal all that lay behind Paul's decision. Suspending active opposition for the present, she occupied herself with her scrapbook, while the boys listened to the broadcast of a Notre Dame game. Inwardly, however, Caroline was busily considering plans to cure Paul of the religious idea at once. She must get the best of Russell, after that unspeakable scene this morning. As the immediate sting of his words died away, she began to tell herself that after all, though couched in elaborate psychological terms, it was no more than he had said to her twenty years ago. She had dismissed his false charges then, and she would again.

Lifelong compensation, indeed! Caroline could make out just as convincing a case against him. What was his unjustified hatred of her if not a compensation for her youthful wound to his pride? Yes, that was why he seized every chance to insult her, she assured herself, well satisfied with this comforting explanation. Too bad she had not thought to tell him that. A nasty weapon but one she would not hesitate to use if he provoked an all-out battle over Paul. Of course, it probably would not be necessary. When Paul turned up in school Monday, Reverend Russell Carmody, S.J., would know that in Mrs. R. Emmett Murray he had met his match.

"What do you make of this Jesuit idea of Paul's?" asked Bob later, as they drove down the west side toward Militellos'.

"Oh, just some nonsense he'll get over," said Caroline easily. "I can remember when I was bound and determined to join the convent. If the family hadn't talked me out of it, where would I be now?"

"You'd be Mother General of some order," Bob chuckled. "But if Paul persists, though, I suppose we'll have to let him try it, at least. Opposition will only make him feel martyred."

"Perhaps when you're elected mayor, he'll be enjoying himself too much to care about the Order anymore." Caroline knew that if she could talk Paul into waiting that long, the problem would solve itself.

"Election is still nearly a month away," sighed Bob. "Afterward, I'd like to take at least a month off from everything to rest up. Maybe we could take a little trip somewhere."

"We'll see, dear," said Caroline noncommittally. She felt that the fruits of victory in Lakeport could not be tasted too soon. "After it's all over, you'll be so glad you ran. So will the boys."

"And so will you!" laughed Bob. "Then you can start playing First Lady of Lakeport."

Caroline joined in his laughter, owning the soft impeachment.

"Those things mean a great deal to you, don't they?" Bob smiled indulgently. "I guess you wouldn't be Caroline if they didn't."

"I wish you'd thought of that earlier in the week!" Caroline was sharply reminded of the banquet. "When I think of what I'm missing tonight for the Militellos!"

With a tact that surprised Caroline, the five younger Militello children had evidently been given their dinner



earlier and sent upstairs; only Joe and Rita joined their parents in welcoming the Murrays. The house impressed Caroline as an interior decorator's nightmare. Originally furnished in the worst possible taste of the last war period, since then it seemed to have undergone everything one could expect from such a vulgarly large family, she thought, taking in at one incredulous glance the overstuffed mohair living-room suite, the silk-shaded mahogany floor lamps, the artificial flowers in cut glass vases, the cheap prints of religious paintings, and other touches that looked to be right out of a mail-order catalog of twenty years ago.

When the six of them sat down at the round, golden oak dining-room table, Caroline was startled to find that her hosts still said grace before meals — and apparently not just in front of company. She was afraid that conversation was going to follow the double standard, for instead of alternating sexes, Mrs. Militello had placed Rita between herself and Caroline, and Joe between his father and Bob. Thus, though she sat at Dr. Militello's right, as Bob did at Mrs. Militello's, Caroline could see how table talk might easily break into two parts, with the men talking politics while she was drawn into obvious agreements with her hostess about children, cooking, and their few common acquaintances. Really, thought Caroline, the things I do for Bob!

However, while Rita brought in the steaming dishes of completely American food and her father filled each plate in turn, conversation naturally remained general.

"We missed Paul at the dance last night," said Joe. "How is he today? He's not still sick, is he, Dr. Murray?"

Joe was just naïve enough to have swallowed that excuse about the headache, Caroline knew.

"Sick?" Bob echoed. "Oh, no, he's all right. But you may not be seeing him for a while, anyway, Joe. Believe it or not, Paul's thinking of joining the Jesuits."

Caroline was not quite near enough to kick Bob's shin under the table, but she favored him with a poisonously sweet smile as she broke through the surprised exclamations of the Militellos. Did Bob never know enough to keep his mouth shut?

"Oh, now, dear, it's not as definite as all that!" She turned to Mrs. Militello. "You know how it is. Every boy who goes to a Catholic school thinks he has a vocation at one time or another, but I'm sure Paul will get over it in no time."

"He sounded pretty definite about it today," said Bob.

This would never do, Caroline saw. Better far to let the conversation break up, after all, than follow its present trend. If Joe should guess Paul's reason and Bob found out . . . !

"But, of course, it's *Bob's* future we're most concerned about right now," she confided to the Militellos. "He's so anxious to know what the people on the west side want, aren't you, dear?"

Bob took his cue. "I certainly am. And whatever they want, I'm sure we can give it to them better than the Republicans."

"Well, one thing I can tell you," Dr. Militello began. Joe was listening attentively; so, satisfied that she had launched a discussion along the proper lines, Caroline proceeded to take over her side of the table. So far Rita had hardly said a word; she was probably biting off her

tongue to keep from saying the wrong thing, or perhaps sheer nervousness for once overcame even her desire to talk.

Undoubtedly the presence of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray as a dinner guest was a major event in Rita's drab little life, Caroline thought, recalling her goggle-eyed awe the day of the interview. The poor thing would probably be quoting her for weeks to come. Caroline was not one to disappoint such a receptive audience. With many a fond reference to Monsignor and cozy anecdote of the bishop, she succeeded in making Catholic society sound as glamorous as Rita could have imagined; she only wished it seemed that way to her.

In the midst of an account of how she had been persuaded to organize the Lakeport Trinity Alumnae, the telephone began to ring. All her suppressed energy released in one burst, Rita nearly overturned her chair in a mad scramble to reach the phone, even though it was only in the adjoining hall. Caroline went on with her story, but it was impossible not to overhear most of Rita's conversation. Her end of it seemed to consist largely of crushing retorts such as "Oh, yeah?" "Says you!" and "A lot you know, Nick Antonucci!"

That name sounded vaguely familiar to Caroline, but she made no effort to place it.

"Oh, I never did!" came Rita's voice from the hall. "You did not! . . . What a lie! . . . No, they're not either! . . . One of them's going away to be a priest, so there! . . . Never mind how! . . . Go ahead, then, see if I care!"

Caroline was alarmed by the obvious reference to Paul. If word of his intentions spread now, it would only

revive the rumor with new strength. He really *must* go back to school Monday! Oh, damn that big-mouthed girl, thought Caroline helplessly. And damn Bob for letting the thing out at all. And especially double damn Russell for starting this whole embarrassing business! She would fix him for this if it was the last thing she did.

Rita returned to the table, flushed with a feeling of her power over men.

"That was my boy friend," she announced to Caroline. "He's halfback on the St. Ignatius team. He wanted me to go out tonight, but I wouldn't! We had a fight last Saturday, and he's gonna do a whole lot more crawling before I take him back. A girl's got to play hard to get sometimes."

Rita seemed about as hard to get as a head cold, thought Caroline, but she exchanged a tolerant, older generation smile with Mrs. Militello. Thank God, it was time for the dessert now. Another few minutes and this ordeal would be over.

"My, that was really a delicious dinner," she said when they had finished, with a little too much surprise in her voice.

"What did you expect, spaghetti and garlic?" The doctor's resentment was not entirely concealed by his social laugh. No matter how clever he was, Caroline would not stand his brusque, chip-on-the-shoulder manner, and she had a suspicion that he cordially returned her dislike. Doubtless he was taking out on her his resentment of his own wife by comparison, she always told herself. He could have gone so much further with a more capable, less family-tied woman to guide him.

The rally was to start at eight; so, little time was spent

over coffee in the living room. Joe and Rita soon disappeared upstairs, while their mother settled down for an evening at home. She would probably have no idea what the political speeches were all about, anyway, thought Caroline, as she thanked her profusely for the dinner and promised to come again when she could stay longer.

Loretta and Irma no longer bothered coming to hear their husbands speak, but Caroline still enjoyed the novelty of a place on the speakers' platform as the wife of the Democratic candidate for mayor. As she walked up the aisle of Garibaldi Hall between the two men, while a particularly tinny band dinned *There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight*, she heard Dr. Militello mutter, "There's too many of these young Republican turncoats here tonight! I hope they don't make any trouble."

When they were seated beneath the large American flag, Caroline saw what he meant, as here and there in the audience she could pick out young Italians of the corner lounge type, obviously looking for excitement.

"That big bruiser in the first row there is Nick Antonucci, the football player, that Rita was talking to," Dr. Militello told her. "He's certainly got it in his nose for the administration for some reason — even fought with Rita about it."

"Oh, really?" The young man looked as if he had broken the training ban on liquor, thought Caroline. Now she recalled where she had heard his name before. Of course. That family who had so boldly applied to Catholic Charities for relief. If Nick was still in school, they must have succeeded in making some other arrange-

ments, but at least they were not squandering the diocesan funds.

There was respectful applause when the presiding ward supervisor introduced the mayor, and more for the two Italian councilmen. After the long and impassioned appeals of the latter pair, an intermission was deemed necessary to relieve the intellectual strain of the audience, and everyone was urged to join in the band's rendition of *Let Me Call You Sweetheart* and other old favorites, with the aid of words supplied in booklets of party advertising. Caroline noticed that the Antonucci youth remained grimly silent throughout.

Such a haze of smoke now filled the air that she could hardly read the farthest "Murray For Mayor" banners. Mentally she was contrasting this coarse, common crowd with the white-tied and smartly gowned gathering that was even now drinking in the well-chosen words of Sir Neville Boyce-Carewe. Politics or no politics, such a conflict of dates must never arise again. She would make that quite clear to Bob on the way home. She had a bone to pick with him, too, about that indiscreet mention of Paul's notion.

When the speeches began again, there was a thundering ovation for Dr. Militello, accompanied by much stamping, whistling, and catcalling of a good-natured sort. Probably because of the doctor's warm introduction, Bob also received a hearty hand. Caroline felt encouraged anew as she heard her husband repeat with obvious sincerity his pledge to serve the city as faithfully in the mayor's office as he had in the health department. He pointed out that in the absence of any real platform the Republicans were doing their best to stir up Old

World issues of nationalities — though actually the more recently immigrated Americans had only to look at the record to know who their real friends were. After making a specially well-received point, Bob would turn a little to receive an encouraging smile from Caroline.

When he had finished without noticeable interruption, Caroline breathed a sigh of relief. Now the floor was open for questions, and Bob was flooded with them, some in broken English, about new schools for the Italian section and other matters of local interest. When one or two of the poolroom politicians tried to upset him with foolish questions, he quickly turned the joke against them.

"Will that be all?" he said at last, when he had answered each inquiry as clearly as possible.

"No, that won't be all!" Nick Antonucci, who had evidently been screwing his courage to the sticking point, lurched to his feet. Caroline felt a sick apprehension at the look on his thick-featured face.

"What would you like to know?" asked Bob pleasantly, ignoring the deliberately insolent tone.

"I'd like to know what you got to say about them precious twins of yours, that's what!" roared Antonucci. "Why don'tcha tell us why they gotta be separated?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what you're talking about." Pale and dismayed, Bob glanced around at Caroline in consternation; he guessed, she realized with alarm, that she had been keeping something important from him.

"Well, if you don't you're the only one in Lakeport that don't!" Antonucci shouted. "All the Republicans from the top on down are on to them two punks! They're so stuck on each other now ya gotta send one of them away! Deny that!"

Before he had uttered the last words, Bob had leaped down from the platform and was striding toward him, fists clenched.

"No, Bob!" Caroline heard herself scream, as the football player began, "Now, Doc, you don't wanna get yourself all mussed up —"

"You'll take back every filthy word you said!" Bob cried hoarsely, as his right fist sent Antonucci sprawling back over the seats. He made another lunge, and then quite suddenly he himself crumpled to the floor.

A cry went up from the audience. Caroline rushed down from the platform and pushed her way through the crowd to Bob's side, but Dr. Militello was there before her.

"His heart, his heart!" she was whimpering wildly. The doctor leaned over the prostrate figure. When he raised his eyes, one look told Caroline that it was already too late.



## *Chapter 13*

EVERY word of Monsignor's funeral sermon twisted the knife in Caroline's heart. As she sat between the boys, all in deepest mourning, in the front pew of St. Vincent's Cathedral — offered by the bishop himself for the solemn high Requiem Mass — she could still scarcely believe that it was indeed Bob who lay inside that black and silver casket in the middle aisle — Bob, who only a week ago today had been persuading her not to attend that banquet; Bob, whom she somehow had never had time to love enough. In these past few days, though, there had been plenty of time. She had wept until she could weep no more; now there was only this aching emptiness that nothing would ever quite fill.

After the hysterical unreality of Saturday night, Dr. Militello had kept her under a sedative all through Sunday, and when she awoke Monday, Frank and Irma had all the necessary arrangements made — even to the black wardrobe Irma had ordered, knowing her measurements. They had been wonderful. So had her grief-stricken parents, and George and Loretta, and the Militellos — everyone, in fact, whom she had despised or deplored or tried to use to her own ends.

They had all been too kind to her. When she sobbed over and over again, "I should never have let Bob run! I knew he had heart trouble; I'm the one who killed him!"

they only made her feel worse with assurances that Bob had wanted to be mayor, that she had no reason to reproach herself, that it was God's time to call him. Strangely enough, only Pat Hartman, of all people, had seemed to understand. Though she seemed skeptical of Paul's intentions, the girl had made it a point to find Caroline herself at the wake, and press her hand, with real tears in her eyes.

"Oh, Pat!" Caroline had choked, feeling a sudden kinship with her. "To think this is all my own fault!"

"I think I know what you mean, Mrs. Murray," Pat had said gently. "But if you've learned your lesson, then it hasn't all been for nothing, has it?"

Whatever Pat's lesson was, she had learned it twenty-five years younger than Caroline. There was a look of new content in her eyes as she went off with Joe Militello.

In the cold, clear light in which she could look at things these days, Caroline knew that she had never really matured until now — perhaps because she had never suffered before. As an outgrowth of that one adolescent disappointment, nursed and magnified through the years, she had spurned every relationship that made a woman's life rich and full. As daughter and sister, even as niece and aunt, but above all as wife and mother, she had taken everything, given nothing. Courage, her one virtue, would stand her in good stead now. Bob's death had not broken her spirit, but it had, she hoped, softened her into something more like a true woman and a true Catholic.

Yes, only Bob had understood and forgiven the essential childishness of her sense of values. He had seen her, not as Russell did, as a monster of iniquity or a social

phenomenon, but as a little girl spitefully showing off her own toys because she envied those of richer children. Always she had to grasp for what was just out of reach. If she were poorer, it would have been wealth; because she had enough money, it was the social conquest of Lakeport that seemed so necessary. Had that been attained, the state capital or Washington itself might have been next. That must have been what Russell meant when he said that she would never have what she wanted, though now his words had come true in a far more literal sense.

But even a child, spoiled and selfish as she had been, could do a great deal of harm — more harm than poor Bob ever suspected, she realized bitterly — more than anyone knew. Perhaps that was part of her punishment — the respect people paid to the role she had played so long. Only she could feel the irony of such tribute. Of course, no one could have reached the position she had in Catholic circles without incidentally having done some good along the way; but that had been the furthest thing from her mind, she was forced to admit to herself now. She had reversed the ends and means of such activities, and used them only to gratify her own urge for power.

When the conventional decent interval should be over, and Catholic society was clamoring once more for the presence of Mrs. R. Emmett Murray, she was resolved never to accept an office higher than that of secretary, and that only in organizations she knew served some really useful purpose. She might never be as hard-working as Irma, as easygoing as Loretta, nor as self-effacing as Sister Marcella, but at least she could try,

as far as it was in her to do so. Whatever little she could do for the faith could scarcely make up for all the unconscious harm she had done in its name.

Even toward God her eyes seemed open for the first time. No longer was He a being made in her own image and likeness to reward the right people according to the amount of external Catholic Action performed. Yes, she promised herself in the pain of the moment, the years of widowhood ahead would be less conspicuously Catholic, more concerned with the spiritual realities of the faith whose true meaning she had never explored — if only in preparation for reunion with Bob in the next world. Such a soul as his must surely have been ready for eternity even without Extreme Unction. The way he looked that night, lying there on the floor of Garibaldi Hall, would haunt her always, she thought now — whenever she felt the old temptation to play the martyr to Catholic Action, to impress some supposed social superior, to put some unoffending woman “in her place.”

But the past which she had been too busy scheming to enjoy had now taken on the charm of the irrevocably lost. Even her little round of parties, teas, and bridge luncheons had meant more with Bob always there in the background to depend on, smiling at her triumphs, consoling her defeats, without ever looking too deeply into what lay beneath them. And it was she alone, with the best intentions for everyone, who had set in motion the train of events that had laid Bob in his coffin and shattered forever all that carefree, comfortable life she had loved more than she knew. Everything that had happened went back to the June day of the twins' graduation, when she had first conceived her great idea and

begun to materialize it through Frank, while Irma and the children sang around the piano. How happy they had all been then!

Never had she even begun to appreciate Bob as he deserved, she came to realize more and more, standing by his coffin in the living room, which was banked ceiling high with the floral tributes of a shocked city. Even the scents of her favorite corsage flowers would have painful associations now. Many callers had come on her account, of course, but there were far more whom she had never seen before — Sisters of Charity and lay nurses from the hospital, people Bob had helped there, clerks from the health department, children from orphanages he had given free medical care, young doctors he had advised, patients from years back — all friends made in that active professional life of his in which Caroline had taken only the most perfunctory interest.

Nothing she could ever do would be worthy of him, but when St. Charles' redecoration was completed, it would include a large, new, stained-glass window "in loving memory of Dr. Robert E. Murray" — the way he preferred to write his name — with no mention of the donor.

To think that the very last look he had given her was one of doubt and distrust! This was but one of the thousand ways in which remorse pursued her — her only fit retribution, she half realized. She could never even be sure how much the fatal heart attack had been brought on by the brief scuffle and how much by the shock of hearing the rumor about the twins as he had. No torment could be more agonizing nor more mercilessly just than the weary recurrence of these vain regrets.

Painfully, she tried to reconstruct every recent word and act of Bob's — especially during his last day. She had let him sleep most of the afternoon, when they could have been talking. She had not even intended to allow him the little trip to which he had been looking forward. She had been planning to lecture him all the way home from the rally. Only the mercy of God had prevented her from attending that banquet! All day Saturday, with never a thought of Bob, she had been devising means to keep Paul out of the Jesuits.

Under the circumstances, since the whole inflated rumor had now been publicly exploded, Paul had not said any more about his intentions except to the few people he thought would be impressed. When Mimi Jordan appeared briefly at the wake, though not too clear as to all that Paul's decision involved, she had seemed on the whole not displeased. Perhaps, thought Caroline, Mimi sensed that without compromise on her part their divergent backgrounds would never blend any better than had those of her own parents. No doubt she liked to think that at least no other girl would ever get Paul.

Caroline was not so sure about that. Only yesterday Paul had said to her, "Of course, I won't go away now, Mother, if you really feel you need me."

But Caroline no longer trusted Paul's motives so completely now that she had a clearer view of her own. Much as she would have liked to settle the question for him, she would not give him the easiest way out of his hastiness, if that was what he was seeking. Let him either go through with his announced plans, or else admit that they had been no more than a rash expedient. He must make up his own mind, one way or the other.

"No, Paul," she forced herself to say, "you must go, if you believe that's your vocation. I'll still have Peter."

But would she have Peter? How much of the truth had he pieced together? Would he ever trust her as he did her mother, or even Irma? Could she ever win back his confidence after what she had tried to do? And all to break up his innocent little romance with Janet, who had been so unobtrusively helpful through these past dark days. Perhaps it was partly Janet's sympathy that had enabled Peter to bear up so much better than Paul, though the loss of their father must mean even more to him. Or perhaps it was just as Russell said, Peter was the stronger character.

Russell had been so right in so many things he had said, both in his discourse and in his private scene with her. She still could not quite see their clash as a simple struggle between good and evil, but she could no longer deny that the good for which he aimed was as real as hers had been synthetic. In exposing her to herself, he had only been trying to make her face the truth as he saw it.

Indeed, his only mistake was in tracing so much of her motivation to the loss of Bert Jordan. Unversed as she was in self-analysis, Caroline even now could not explain what made her as she was, but she knew that it went deeper than her frustration over Bert. That had been a contributing factor, certainly, but it had done no more than crystalize an urge that was already latent in her personality. Perhaps it was no more than the result of being the only daughter of a comfortable family, used to getting everything she wanted until she was old enough to know that some things she wanted could never

be attained in Lakeport. Caroline did not know, and it no longer mattered much now.

Russell had been unable to come to the wake, having retired Sunday to the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital with a "breakdown," presumably brought on by overwork. At first Caroline had imagined him thoroughly enjoying his poor health, surrounded by best sellers, flowers, and dainties from devoted students of all ages and holding long heart-to-heart talks with his freshmen. This picture might be true enough, outwardly, but from what Sister Marcella said it was clear that what had really put Father Carmody under Dr. Militello's care was the nervous strain of the previous week, ending in the fatal outcome of what had started as part of a lecture in adolescent psychology. Though Caroline doubted that he would care to hear anything she had to say, nevertheless she had sent Peter over with a note expressing her heartfelt conviction that she now understood what he had tried to tell her and absolving him of any blame in regard to the gossip.

Certainly he could not have known how his psychological speculation about the twins would affect Nick Antonucci. As far as Caroline could gather, Nick had first reported his impression to Rita to cure her of her silly crush on the Murrays, and the more she defended them, the more he felt obliged to repeat the charge, even after he knew it was unfounded. Undoubtedly he had no idea of Caroline's connection with Catholic Charities — unless he learned of it from Rita's interview — but no one knew better than she what lay behind his bitter resentment against Democrats in general and the carefree, popular Murrays in particular.



Thus when Charlotte Phelps' lightly repeated version of the story, though never considered campaign material by the more responsible Republican leaders, had quickly trickled down from the Porter Fentons' hunt breakfast to the ward heeler level, Nick had naturally considered it an independent confirmation of his own suspicions. Even so, things might have gone no further had not Rita refused him a date Saturday night and at the same time revealed Paul's intentions. Inflamed by this apparently final proof of what he had said all along, Nick saw his chance to earn the gratitude of the Republicans, discredit the twins, and avenge himself against the city, all at one blow. A bottle of potent Chianti from a neighbor's cellar had removed the last of his inhibitions. Knowing what Bob would have done, Caroline had brought herself to ask President O'Shea not to expel the easily led, dumbly remorseful halfback nor cancel his athletic scholarship, though she hardly expected the request to be granted.

But for Rita she could not honestly feel very sorry. Confronted by Janet with what Pat had told her at lunch Saturday, the talkative girl had finally confessed her multiple role in the spread of the story. Sister Marcella, to whom she made the admission, promptly had her removed from office and membership in every organization in the school. It was a much subdued and chastened Rita who turned up to pay her respects to Dr. Murray, but Caroline noted with approval that Janet showed her quickly to the door, without even introducing Peter and Paul.

Indeed, only as daughter of the prospective mayor had Rita been spared complete expulsion from the Mount; for, strangely enough, there was every chance that Rita

would soon be wearing Pat Hartman's shoes — on the wrong feet, of course, Caroline expected. In a sense, she felt responsible for the odd predicament in which the Democratic party now found itself, for, arguing that the healthful aspects of the Hartman administration had been emphasized throughout the campaign, the two Italian councilmen had seized the opportunity of Bob's death to demand that the county executive council endorse Dr. Militello in his place. With ominous references to La Guardia's success in New York, they warned the other leaders that a fusion party of discontented Italians and Poles would defeat the two present machines at the next election unless the doctor was chosen.

The Poles, offered a number of appointive plums, were willing to accept an Italian candidate, not only because of their similar position in Lakeport, but also probably because they had no bitter memories of Italy from the last war and it had not actively entered the current one. So, with the Democratic chances better than ever, Caroline was giving the city its first Italian mayor, and the one woman she had done most to alienate would be First Lady of Lakeport.

Obviously, Mrs. Militello would need some sort of social mentor when she assumed her new position. Would it not be the plain duty of a more experienced friend to instruct her in those little niceties of etiquette which she had never had the opportunity to acquire? Bob would surely want her to do that much for the wife of his colleague, Caroline told herself. There was, indeed, a certain grim satisfaction in the prospect of the local smart set's enforced submission to the humble Italian woman — they who had thought themselves too good for Caroline.

The power behind the throne, after all, could be a good thing if used for proper ends.

How could she have envied such shallow snobs as Miriam Jordan? Caroline wondered. For twenty years she had enjoyed with Bob all that Miriam had wanted most of her worthless Bert — for whose memory Caroline now felt nothing but distaste. Bob had been perfectly right. People like the Jordans were simply not worth bothering with — a fact that must be made quite clear to Mrs. Militello before the first official reception. Yes, more than one aristocratic nose would be put out of joint during the next four years. . . .

The choir's responsory, *Libera me, domine, de morte aeterna*, reminded Caroline that the Requiem Mass was over. When the bishop as celebrant had sprinkled and incensed the bier and said the final Latin prayers, the undertaker appeared to turn it about on its wheeled stand and move it slowly down the aisle.

Bob would want her to bear up, Caroline assured herself, as she carefully lowered the crepe veil over her face, and arose. A study in unrelieved black, she walked majestically down the long aisle between her two tall sons, leaning on Peter's arm only a little, near the end. On the cathedral steps news photographers pressed through the crowd for closer views of the bereaved family. Bravely, Mrs. R. Emmett Murray held up her head for the pictures that would be in all the evening papers.















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